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## A Spectrum of Perspectives on Sri Tyagaraja

By

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PART ONE

### INTRODUCTION : REMEMBERING THE SAINT

Various South Indians have emphasized different aspects of Tyāgarāja's personality, thought, and activities. Yet most agree on the basic facts of his life : he was a Telugu *brāhman* born in 1767 in Tiruvārur in the Tanjāvūr District. As an adult he lived in Tiruvaiyāru. He repeated the *Rāma tāraka mantra* which led to religious experiences that inspired further devotion and song. Tyāgarāja studied music with *Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭaramaṇayya*, was married twice, and taught music to many disciples. During his long life he composed hundreds of songs which continue to possess a strong appeal, and he is remembered as a person of intense piety who loved his village and did not desire to sing in the court. He made a pilgrimage that took him as far North as Tirupati, when he was in his seventies, and died, after taking *sannyāsin* vows, in 1847

that identity is preserved in a community's fluctuating memory of those actions, we cannot describe the identity or role of Tyāgarāja in South Indian culture without discussing his activities, his accomplishments, and the ways they have registered in the minds and lives of other South Indians.

Accordingly, a spectrum of views is presented here to show the vitality of the mythos and art of Tyāgarāja in peoples, lives today. This gathering of representative perspectives is intended to provide an indication of the impact made by Tyāgarāja on South Indian cultural awareness.

**Beloved of Both Tamilians and Andhras**

#### A Spectrum of Views

Though basic agreement on these facts exists, the meanings derived from the words and music of Tyāgarāja's songs, and the legendary episodes of his life story vary somewhat, depending on the differing personalities, backgrounds and emphases of the people who have remembered and repeated those songs and stories. Because the identity of an individual is not static but is expressed in actions, and because

When one attends an upper caste Hindu wedding and reception celebrated in Madras, Bangalore, Tiruchirāpalli, or Madurai today, one hears the musicians rendering Tyāgarāja's songs. When one attends a *bhajana* meeting in South India, where devotees sing to their hearts' desire, Tyāgarāja's songs are very often included in the program. At the *sabhās* and academies, classical music performers regularly demonstrate their talents and proficiency by rendering Tyāgarāja masterpieces in

concert. Through temple loudspeakers and from blaring *nāgasvaras* in processions, from the practice rooms of music schools, from radio and TV consoles and the stages of *harikathā* performers engaged in musical discourses, Tyāgarāja's songs are being sung. Though now they are amplified by electricity and multiplied by cassette and transistor, they retain a poignant sincerity and contemplative power; they seem to have an authenticity that stems from a life that was lived deeply.

Who was the composer of these favourite songs of South Indians, songs which seem to have captured so many of the people's sentiments, and to speak even now for their deepest concerns? As K. Brahmananda Reddi said, "No other composer in the South has dominated the Karṇāṭaka music system as much as Tyāgarāja for well over one hundred years now."<sup>1</sup>

#### Symbol of Andhra

Not only in the Southernmost part of India, but also in the lower central Telugu-speaking areas is Tyāgarāja so beloved. Though he lived in Tamil Nadu and taught mainly Tamilian disciples, he was an eloquent poet of the Telugu tongue. In a line of the popular Telugu poem *Mā Telugu Talli* ("Our Telugu Mother") the author, Sankarambadi Sundaracarya, praises the notes vibrating in the throat of Tyāgarāja as eternally representative of the Telugu-speaking region, along with the great rivers of Āndhra Pradesh and the beautiful city of Amaravati<sup>2</sup> even though Tyāgarāja never lived in a Telugu speaking region. Most of the Telugu community in Tanjavur District, where Tyāgarāja's home-village was situated, had migrated there

around 1600 during the Nayak reign when, Telugu pandits and artists were being patronized by the court. Generations later this community still retains its mother tongue.

Thus, Āndhra affection for Tyāgarāja is probably in part an appreciation for the exiled kinsman's spiritual genius which created masterpiece songs in the beloved Telugu language. As the poet C. Milocz said, "language is the only homeland."<sup>3</sup> Also, Tyāgarāja's importance for Āndhras stems from his commitment to dedicated piety and uncompromising spirituality in an age of secular modernization. Furthermore, he stands as a symbol of an Āndhra native son who won over the populace of Tamil Nadu with his musical virtuosity.

#### Arya Sampath

As for Tamilian appreciation, Subramania Bharati, considered to be one of the most important Tamil poets of the twentieth century, called Tyāgarāja's songs an "ocean of *rasas*" or aesthetic mood-essences: "Tyāgarāja was the recipient of divine grace.....and is largely responsible for Karṇāṭaka music being a living art at present. Like the sages of yore, he sacrificed his personality to the deity he worshipped, and he shone as an embodiment of the musical art." The "sacrifice" of personality refers to the arduous self-effacing and comfort-eschewing practices of ceaseless *mantra* repetition and dedicated worship in which Tyāgarāja is said to have spent his life. For Bharati, the saint's unique power in uniting melody, rhythm, and feeling in songs "was not the result of any deliberate attempt on the part

of Tyāgarāja. If there is truth in one's mind, the music flows naturally in this manner." Hence, Bharati lists Tyāgarāja's songs among the most excellent examples of the "*arya sampath*", the noble Indian tradition, along with the Vedas, the works of Tulsidas and Kalidas, the Ellora rock temple, and the Taj Mahal<sup>4</sup>. It is not uncommon to find Tamilians holding up Tyāgarāja as an example of Tamil Nadu's contribution to pan-Indian culture. While speakers of Tamil may not always understand all of the words in a typical song of Tyāgarāja, they often know enough Telugu and Sanskrit to get the gist of it, and appreciate it.

#### Poet of National Integration

Āndhras also have been known to elevate Tyāgarāja to symbolize the ideal man. In 1981, at the Fifth World Tamil Conference in Madurai, Chief Minister Anjiah of Andhra Pradesh said that Tyāgarāja is a "living symbol of cultural cohesion as well as linguistic harmony" transcending the myriad barriers which separate people in India. "On this occasion..... I would venture to hold aloft the supreme example of Saint Tyāgarāja to those who indiscreetly wallow in linguistic chauvinism and regional exclusivism in many parts of India today"<sup>5</sup>. While this statement may be coloured by political rhetoric and the defensiveness of a Telugu man at a Tamil convention, it is noteworthy that Tyāgarāja here serves as a symbol of unity. As we shall see, this is not the first time that he has been cast in such a role.

Telugu scholar C. Narayana Rao has described Tyāgarāja as "the greatest modern exponent of Andhra culture". He has written of Tyāgarāja's genius

as the result of a synthesis. "The emotionalism of the Āndhra gained by the systematizing instinct of the Tamilian and the pragmatic temperament of the Tamilian was leavened by... [Āndhra] emotional enthusiasm"<sup>6</sup>.

These generalizations may be criticized as too facile and broad to cover all Āndhras and Tamilians, yet there may be an element of truth in them. The Āndhra and Tamilian personalities *do* differ; and it is undeniable that Tyāgarāja *did* blend Tamilian music of the Tanjāvūr tradition with Telugu lyricism to express his *bhakti* moods. All would agree that he carried to new heights of excellence the Karṇāṭaka system of music practised in Tanjāvūr in the later 18th and early 19th centuries. With hundreds of devotional songs written in mellisonant Telugu, he earned the respect and reverence of millions ..Tamilians and Āndhras alike.

In a book published in 1927, M. S. Ramaswami Aiyar wrote that Tyāgarāja "...consolidated the whole of Madras in the 19th century, much in the same manner as Dr. Rabindranath Tagore does the whole of India... in the 20th"<sup>7</sup>. "The whole of Madras" at that time meant not the present city of Madras, but Madras District, or Madras Presidency, as it was called, which covered much of South India, excluding only Travancore, Mysore, Bombay, and Hyderabad Districts.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi wrote, not long before his death, "Wherever I go in South India, I hear the songs of Saint Tyāgarāja being sung. There is no doubt

that this devotee of Ram has captured the religious imagination of Madrasis with his sweet song"<sup>9</sup>

### Linguistic States

It should also be noted that until 1957 the formation of States according to languages had not occurred, and that with the change in laws defining linguistic States, many thousands of Telugu-speaking people living in what are now designated as Tamil Nadu areas migrated to regions now designated as part of Andhra Pradesh. Yet the diminished number of Telugu speakers in Tamil Nadu has not lessened Tyāgarāja's popularity there.....such is his success in composing masterpieces of music in the Tamil musical tradition. While generally the Telugu people of Āndhra have not quite attained the distinction of proficiency in Karṇāṭaka music in quantity of learning or quality of mastery which Tamilians have, Tyāgarāja's songs are sung in cultural centres of Andhra by great Telugu musicians such as Dr. Balamuralikrishna. Also, through Telugu publications and the media, Tyāgarāja's life story is well known in Āndhra Pradesh. The Tirumāla Tirupati Devasthānam, for example, has recently published booklets on Tyāgarāja, and has issued a multi-volume collection of his songs in Telugu.<sup>10</sup>

### Sri Tyāgarāja's Expanding Popularity

The late Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, scholar, educator, and statesman of modern India, wrote that "Śri Tyāgarāja's life and work have moved multitudes in South India to spiritual ecstasy and noble living"<sup>11</sup>. Radhakrishnan saw Tyāgarāja as one of the most notable of the saint-singers of the recent past who stressed

vital Indian ideals and who "with their passionate devotion to the ideals of beauty, harmony, freedom, and aspiration, have had the strongest impact on society"<sup>12</sup>

The late Swami Sivananda, an important *guru* of recent times, was born in Tinnevely District, South India, and studied at the Tanjāvūr Medicine Institute. Later, he founded an *asram* in Rishikesh. He called Tyāgarāja "the greatest songster-saint which the world has ever produced..... He was full of love and devotion to the Lord and he had direct '*darśan*' [vision] of the Lord and had also Cosmic Consciousness"<sup>13</sup>

At first this tribute ("the greatest songster-saint.....the world has ever produced") may seem to be extravagant hyperbole. Yet it must be recalled that Tyāgarāja's impact on South Indian music was so great that Karṇāṭaka music is sometimes divided into three historical eras: Pre-Tyāgarāja, Tyāgarāja, and Post-Tyāgarāja. So thorough has been the performing of non-Tyāgarāja songs in the Tyāgarāja manner—and this includes nearly all South Indian composers' works—that we know the authentic melody of only a few dozen songs from before Tyāgarāja's time. The deepening lifelong appreciation of Tyāgarāja's music by South Indians is often so great that they cannot imagine any comparable religious composer. In the past one hundred years a large bibliography of Tyāgarāja-related books and articles has accumulated...probably larger than the list of published materials relating to any other Indian musician-saint. Much of the material, however, is the reiteration of the saint's life story and collections of song texts.

### Expanding Popularity

Tyāgarāja's enduring and expanding popularity is undeniable. The continued growth of his annual *samādhi* festival in Tiruvaiyāru and its nationwide broadcast on All India Radio, the ever-multiplying celebrations of the same festival in other parts of India and all over the world, the publications about Tyāgarāja in various languages, the prints of his portraits which one sees throughout South India, the three motion pictures based on his life, a national postage stamp bearing his image, the appearance of his legendary life in simplified illustrated format, the concerts, tape recordings and records of his songs available on the international market—all bespeak a religious figure who has captured in a phenomenal manner the imagination of a people and holds it securely enthralled.

In the first book in English written on Tyāgarāja, C. Tirumalayya Naidu wrote in 1910 that "It is as a pioneer who has enlarged the possibilities of the art [of Karṇāṭaka music] that Tyāgayyar is entitled to our fullest admiration.....he is one of the greatest singers of all times whose influence is closely woven into national thought and action"<sup>14</sup>

More than seventy years after this first book was written, Tyāgarāja's works are more viable than ever, and now Tyāgarāja holds a special place in the estimation of South Indians united in a devotional-music appreciation that cuts across older sectarian traditions of separatism. As S. V. Ramamurti wrote in an article:

In admiring Tyāgarāja, no one in South India need feel that he is culti-

vating an exotic taste. His music is a synthesis of South Indian culture and is as great as any form of Indian culture. Its Telugu is simple, almost as the Telugu of the girl that goes home in the evening, singing, with her bundle of fresh-cut grass. But from such slim footing Tyāgarāja's music rises tall as the world. Its tradition is Tamil, the tradition of *alvārs* and *nāyanmārs*. Its grammar is Karṇāṭaka, that is to say, South Indian. Its culture is Indian in its vision. Its spirit is human, the spirit of man, the top of creation, communing with his creator. Everyone in South India can understand it, can feel its rhythm' can follow its spirit and feel at home in it. Tyāgarāja, more perhaps than any other single musician, has preserved for us our one great live art with an appeal both deep and wide.<sup>16</sup>

In this and similar statements we can see that Tyāgarāja is perceived as a truly Indian spokesman...that is, as a force providing cultural unity during this century among Āndhras, Tamilians, and Hindu Indians in general.

At present, nearly one hundred and forty years after Tyāgarāja's *samādhi*, one often encounters prints of painted portraits of Tyāgarāja in South India. The pictures depict Tyāgarāja in the apparel of a *haridāsa* or *bhāgavatar*, the wandering singers he admired so much.<sup>16</sup> One often sees these popular pictures in Tamil Nadu in homes and in concert halls, and even more often one hears the saint's songs all over South India. We might say that

Tyāgarāja's constant presence is ubiquitous here. Yet his identity is somewhat enigmatic. Who is this *advaita vedāntin* in *Dāsukuta* markings, whose every *cri du coeur* has been cherished by an important cross-section of his countrymen? What roles does he play in people's lives today?

The meanings which Tyāgarāja's life and works hold for South Indians of this century are multifaceted. In the next three issues we shall explore the views of several leading South Indians to better understand the significance of Tyāgarāja for the contemporary world.

(To be continued)

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- 9 Quoted in T. S. Parthasarathy's article "Two Immortals" in *Swatantra*, a weekly journal, Feb. 21, 1948, p. 26. By "Madrasis" Gandhi meant South Indians, and not only the inhabitants of Madras city.

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15 S. V. Ramamurti, "Medium of Music" in *The Hindu*, Oct. 4, 1941.

16 There are no photographs of Sri Tyāgarāja. A portrait which once belonged to Venkataramana Bhāgavata is now in Walajahpet; another portrait is in Mysore at the palace museum, and a glass painting is in the possession of the family of the descendants of Tyāgarāja's brother.

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## The Trimurthis of Carnatic Music - A Comparison\*

By

Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. S. Pinakapani

The hundred-year span between 1750 and 1850, rightly called the golden era of music, was the most glorious period in the history of music. The three Sangita Maharshis, Sri Thyagaraja Swamy, Sri Muthuswami Deekshitar and Sri Shyama Sastry were born in South India. During the same period, Western Music was blest with genius composers such as Beethoven, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schubert and others.

It was a remarkable divine dispensation that all the three Saint Composers were born in the same village, Tiruvarur, in Tanjore District. They at once created and perfected Carnatic music, which, during that era needed both content and direction. Many other distinguished composers, following the lead given by the Trinity, developed to perfection the finest of fine arts.

The Musical Trinity of South India had many remarkable points in common. All the three were great scholars in Sanskrit, Telugu, Veda and Sastras, in addition to being born geniuses in music. All of them were tutored, inspired and perfected as incomparable masters of music by God-men: the divine Sage Narada for Thyagaraja, Chidambara Yogi for Deekshitar and Sangita Swamy for Shyama Sastry. All the three musicians spurned wealth and preferred to harness their musical gift as a means to attain *moksha*.

Sri Purandara Dasa, to the extent we know, was the earliest musician to conceive the shape of the *kriti*, a composition with a pallavi, anupallavi and charanam. But, Purandara Dasa's original music in which he couched his four lakhs-and-odd compositions was not passed on to us through guru-sishya Parampara. So also, Kshetrappa's 4100 padams, with the result that only about 50-60 padams of that exquisite treasure house are in vogue today. Tallapakam Annamacharya and his progeny had composed and sang in praise of Lord Thirupati Venkateswara around 32,000 compositions comprising both *Adhyatmika* and *Sringara Keertanas*; but their original musical setting had disappeared with them, leaving only residual poetry to posterity.

Considering these facts Thyagaraja, whose 700 kritis, and Deekshitar, whose 400 compositions are very much alive in the music world today, can be hailed as the most prolific composers of Carnatic music. Shyama Sastry and his illustrious son, Subbaraya Sastry, handed down to posterity about 50 compositions. The contention that "Shyama Sastry composed around 300 kritis" can be anybody's guess.

The Musical Trinity, between themselves, had set the trend and given us all conceivable excellence in Carnatic

\* Substantial reproduction of the Keynote Address delivered at the Second Music Seminar conducted on February 9th and 10th, 1985 at our Sabha (along with practical demonstrations).

Music, and perfected the system as none else before had done. Other composers, big and small, were content to follow in their footsteps.

## SRI THYAGARAJA

Sri Thyagarajaswamy's contribution to Carnatic music is varied and enduring. It was he who developed music from the lyrical stage to the highest peaks of glory. He might have taken Sri Purandara Dasa's kriti, with pallavi, anupallavi and charanam as a model; but he developed it in various ways to give us not less than sixteen different shapes to his kritis. From his simple lilting Divyanāma Sankeertanās to his elaborate Pancharatnas, Thyagaraja has woven a wide variety of patterns of 'kriti' which attained perfection and provided sumptuous material to Carnatic music. By composing a large variety varying from the simplest to the complicated, Thyagaraja was inspired by the noble motive of providing kritis to singers with varying vocal capabilities.

Thyagaraja had composed his kritis in about two hundred ragas most of which never saw the light of day before his advent. He had composed liberally in well-known, wide-scoped ragas such as : Thodi, Kalyani, Sankarabaranam, Bhairavi, Kamboji, Harikamboji, Kharaharapriya etc. He was particularly interested in bringing Apoorva ragas to light. He showed remarkable sense of proportion by composing fewer kritis in Rakti Ragas which do not stand too much elaboration. He introduced certain rare ragas, each through a single kriti.

Just as Muthuswami Deekshitar had done, in addition to covering the most

popular common ragas, Thyagaraja brought to light about 62 ragas, exclusively his own contribution to Carnatic Music.

When many kritis were composed in the raga, wide variety was given in *tālas* in which they were set, in different *eduppus* in the same tala and also in the musical *format*.

An analysis of Thyagaraja's kriti output will reveal a great variety in kriti kalpana. A typical Thyagaraja kriti, not unlike Purandara Dasa's keertanas, will show a pallavi of 1-2 or 4 avaratas; Anupallavi may be of similar length, covering higher reaches of the raga: the Charanam that follows starts around the middle of the middle octave, shows the ragam in the middle octave and leads to the latter half of the Charanam which has "dhatu" similar to that of anupallavi. Charanams may be single or multiple. Sangatis abound in pallavi and anupallavi mostly; sometimes in Charanam too.

There are some kritis of Thyagaraja resembling in structure those of Syama Sastry.

Thyagaraja's kritis are famous for their sangatis i.e. development step by step. First sangati enunciates the line in simple tones; second sangati gives a variation of a part of the line, (second or third); third sangati gives some more detail to the line, while the fourth sangati gives a full-fledged development of the line. The song passes on to the next stage.

One of Sri Thyagaraja's characteristic features is worth noting. Have you ever noticed how he enunciates the ārohana and avarohanam in the pallavi itself as soon as his sangati permits?

Difficult moorchanas to handle was not a problem to Sri Thyagaraja. By combining the swaras conveniently by pausing on certain convenient notes, by choosing easy convenient combinations and by concentrating on Arohanam or Avarohanam—whichever circumvents the difficulty—he tames the ragas, removing the difficulty in handling.

Up to Thyagaraja's era, stiff poetry had been the stilted vehicle of Carnatic music. *Thyagaraja showed by example how flowing conversational prose could be more suitable and appealing than poetic medium for kritis.*

Thyagaraja was not averse to handling vivadi swara ragas. He knew how to produce melody by using clever combinations of swara and by omitting use of vivadi swaras where their employment sounded unmusical. He had composed Kritis in about half of the (40) Vivadi swara ragas and their Janyas.

The message to humanity of Saint Thyagaraja, coming from a Bhakta of highest calibre, can be nothing but the quintessence of Vedas and Upanishads. He railed at social evils and taught humanity that through a happy blend of bhakti and sangita gnana, moksha could be attained by a sincere and an indefatigable sadhaka.

## Sri Muthuswamy Deekshitar

Sri Muthuswamy Deekshitar, like Thyagaraja, was a profound scholar of Sanskrit, the Vedas and Upanishads, Jyotisha and Mantra sastras. A great Bhakta of Lord Subramanya, Deekshitar had

attained "Mantrasiddhi", and poured out songs in praise of Sri Muruga affixing "Guru Guha" as mudra for his songs. Being blessed by his Guru Sri, Chidambara yogi, he rapidly attained scholarship in music. He, too, like Sri Thyagaraja travelled far and wide, visiting many deities in South India and composing kritis in praise of them.

As a music composer, Deekshitar can be compared only with Thyagaraja in many respects. Deekshitar had composed 400 and odd keertanas in more than 200 ragas, all of which have been preserved and handed down to posterity intact through generations of his disciples. The musical style in which he composed his kritis was so rigid that the original dhatu setting could hardly be tampered with. Many of his kritis were fortunately recorded with solfa notation and published by Subbarama Deekshitar, a descendant of the Master.

Muthuswamy Deekshitar preferred to compose mainly in Sanskrit, and chose *vilamba kala* for the bulk of his output. He was perhaps more a Vainika than a vocalist if the grand style and the possibilities of rendering his compositions are any indication. Slow-moving pieces have a dual advantage; they call for the musician's consummate laya gnana as well as mastery of various gamakas of Carnatic Music. While rendering Deekshitar's kritis, the musician will be compelled to sing letter by letter, not word by word, as in quick-moving kalpanas. Such a detailed rendering taxes the best of the musician's gamaka repertoire and his strict adherence to the internal laya arrangement of each individual phrase.

If it is a fact that the Veena ("Veda Janita Vara Veena") can interpret all the gamakas and nuances of Carnatic Music in all their splendour, it is equally true that Sri Muthuswamy Deekshitar's compositions can best be interpreted on the veena, the queen of instruments. Those of us who were fortunate to listen to Veena Dhanammal's private Friday concerts will readily appreciate this statement. Deekshitar's kritis are a consummate vidwan's paradise and the less fortunate individual's headache.

Deekshitar commissioned more than two hundred ragas which include most of the popular key ragas, vivadi swara ragas, a few Hindustani ragas, and all the 72 mela ragas in addition to about 67 ragas exclusively unearthed by him. He also adapted some Hindustani ragas to Carnatic music.

Deekshitar's score is very much like Thyagaraja's. Standing at sea level, can we compare two Himalayan peaks kissing the clouds?

Deekshitar has given us only a few patterns of Kritis. His smallest kriti has a Pallavi and Anupallavi only; some others have pallavi and Samashti Charanam. He had composed also kritis of quicker tempo containing pallavi, anupallavi and charanam ending with 'mitra', a faster (double) speed-Sahityam with or without chitta swaram following it. The chittaswaram in some kritis is intermixed with jathiswaram also.

A typical Deekshitar's kriti will start a Pallavi of 2 or 4 avartams, followed by Anupallavi of same or double the length

which usually concludes with mudra. Chittaswaram is more a feature in smaller kritis in rare ragams, and in vivadi-swara ragams. Sangatis are conspicuous by their absence in most of the kritis; some big compositions, however, are enriched by suitable sangatis. Charanams in typical Deekshitar's full-sized kritis are characteristic. The magnificent charanam dances like a state elephant in procession. It meanders with a stately gait touching all the beauty spots of the raga in the kriti, covering the raga in leisurely steps with dignity, bringing out the raga bhava with great effect. What peroration is to a lecture, so is the terminal mitra to a Deekshitar-kriti. Be it a kriti in a small raga like Nayaki or Ahiri, or be it in a big raga like Todi or Sankarabharanam, a Deekshitar-kriti presents a veritable monograph in that raga. His capacity to dilate upon a raga, however difficult or small, is astonishing. By learning Deekshitar's kritis a senior student blossoms into a Vidwan; a junior up-coming disciple, will get lessons in Alapana and expansion of ragas along with a thorough grounding in classical gamakas; last but not the least, a skilled listener obtains the satisfaction of having been well acquainted with the personalities of Carnataka ragas.

The diction of Sri Muthuswamy Deekshitar matches with the dignified Deva Bhasha he employed in his kritis. He had used "Guru Guha" for his mudra, and most of his kritis bear the name of the raga used. There has recently been a strong suspicion that certain unscrupulous, lesser men have interpolated some spurious compositions imitating Deekshitar's pattern and misusing the Guru Guha mudra; their diction and prosody with 'antya prasa' can be used to identify the mischief.

## Sri Syama Sastry

Sri Syama Sastry and his illustrious son together have left us about 50 Compositions. What these immortal composers lost in quantity has been gained in quality. Every piece of theirs is a scintillating gem in the diadem of Carnatic Music. Their compositions are couched in a bhakta's simple language importuning Goddess Kamakshi for Her grace. Though a great scholar well versed in Sanskrit and Telugu, Veda and Sastras, Syama Sastry did not bring in his scholarship to interfere with his mellifluous, soul-stirring music.

Even though he employed popular rakti ragas in his compositions, he could not hide his flair for *apoorva* ragas such as Chintamani, Manji, Faraz, Kalagada. He had concentrated on the aesthetic beauty of the ragas and did not bother about their expansive faculty. In my humble assessment, Syama Sastry excelled in Bhairavi and Ananda Bhairavi. As in the case of Thyagaraja, Syama Sastry immortalised ragas such as Manji, Ahiri, Mayamalavagoula and Kalagada though he composed only a single kriti in each. Sastry was the only composer whose *swarajatis* have been elevated to platform dignity.

Sastriji was an expert in Laya. He could compose a pallavi in Sarabhanandana Tala and sing it with immaculate skill and Laya intricacies. All Laya specialists revel in this *Thrisra bripata* tala. While Kshetrappa excelled in expounding the beauties of *Thrisra Thripata* Tala in most of his slow moving padams, Syama Sastry

revelled in revealing the rhythmic excellence of *misra chapu tala* in quick moving pieces. Many of his kritis in *misra chapu tala* are outstanding.

Syama Sastry gave us different patterns of Kritis while he contributed a pattern of his own, not unlike Muthuswamy Deekshitar's, but with sangatis. His kriti pattern runs thus. Pallavi opens the innings; the Anupallavi dons a chittaswaram. The charanam has usually four lines in which the raga moves in *alap* style without sangatis; it concludes with a *sahityam* (or *matu*) which takes the *dhatu* of Anupallavi.

Syama Sastry could not help being influenced by his great contemporary Sri Thyagaraja, some of whose patterns Sastry had borrowed.

A pituitary dwarf can hardly compare the merits of giants. The Sangita Thrimurtis were pillars of the huge edifice of Carnatic Music. They were complementary in enriching kriti patterns. The Trinity were three Maharshis who were born to create, develop, establish and spread Carnatic music. Draksha, Kadali and Narikela "pakams" are poetic concepts, All the three "pakams" together are experienced in all their kritis. I personally experience only one "pakam" when I listen to an artistic rendering of any of their compositions. It is "honey-pakam".

"Swara raga..... Sankaruniki telusu Thyagaraja nuta". What do we lesser men know?



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## Sangita Bhupathy Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer

*"Art is the delicious contemplation of the infinitely little" —Saturday Review*

A great writer has said that "posterity is an exacting and ruthless critic and allows few of the great names to remain great".

Viswanatha Iyer's music in a very telling manner.

It is now more than 15 years since Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer passed away. But who is there with a musical soul so dead that he does not recall, with unalloyed pleasure and undiminished admiration, that stupendously gifted musician? Yes, posterity has indeed allowed Viswanatha Iyer to remain great; and scattered through the length and breadth of India are his multitudinous 'fans' (derived from 'fanatic') many of whom gathered at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on 7th September 1985 to indulge in nostalgic memories of the great maestro's brilliant exploits and express their unstinted admiration for one who gave abundant pleasure to rasikas.

Sri Viswanatha Iyer's life (15-9-1896 to 3-4-1970) spanned an Augustan era in Carnatic music that encompassed some of the greatest musicians of all time, viz. Flute Saraba Sastrigal, Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer, Madurai Pushpavanam Iyer, Thirukodikaval Krishna Iyer, Govindaswami Pillai, Palladam Sanjeevi Rao, Dakshinamurthy Pillai, Alaganambi Pillai, Conjeevaram 'Naina' Pillai, each of whom has his own niche in the Hall of Fame. Viswanatha Iyer, if he was to win his spurs, had to measure himself against these Titans and achieve a musical dimension of substantial virtuosity, vidwat and infallible appeal.

Aptly enough, the occasion was the celebration of the 90th birthday of the musician at Madras and inauguration of the Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer Trust, founded by his son Shri Santhanam, with the laudable objective of perpetuating his memory and making available specimens of his timeless music, about which the younger generation today has not the haziest idea whatsoever. The highly respected speakers viz. Sri K. Chandrasekharan, Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman, Sri "Chandilya" brought out the merits of

That our hero achieved his goals is now past history. He saturated himself with music of the highest order and utilised the opportunities that came his way to soak up and assimilate the highest of musical impulses transmitted by his brilliant contemporaries, many older and some co-eval with him. He even acquired some proficiency in mridangam. When Pushpavanam Iyer, with his hauntingly melodious voice (a rarity among musicians of that generation) died, the mantle fell upon young Viswanathan, born with the unearned gift from God, namely, an alluring voice that hugged the sruthi.

Every age has its performance style but Viswanatha Iyer blazed a new trail. What then were the ingredients of his great music?

First, his equipment: Under his erudite guru, Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer, belonging to the direct sishya parampara of Sri Tyagaraja, he learnt a large number of kritis, keyed to the true Tyagaraja tradition. For sheer repertoire, Viswanatha Iyer was unapproachable. This helped him to impart greater variety and breadth to his concerts. He was equally at home in a Tyagaraja kriti as in Ganam Krishna Iyer's and Kshetrappa's padams, Jawalis were almost his *metier*. His nimble and flexible musical intelligence was ever on the *qui vive* to seize on the subtle nuances of padams and jawalis and savour their vividness and glow and perhaps their voyeuristic flavour too!

Secondly, Viswanatha Iyer reclaimed Carnatic music from the phase of laya-ridden petrification (eg. pallavis of inordinate length and complex thala structure) into which it had fallen, thanks to the dominance of laya oriented music of vidwans like Konerirajapuram with his percussive battery. (Even the giant Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer is reported to have protested against these unmusical ventures on occasions) The young musician reinstated music to the power and play of imaginative flights and exploration of the aesthetic delights of raga delineation.

Raga is the kingpin of Carnatic music and Maharajapuram had the wit and the hunch to perceive that he could carve out of it a supreme domain for himself. With his unmistakably original mind - a mind that often realised infallibly its exciting

visions of *raga vistara* - and an imagination of extraordinary subtlety, coupled with an unique faculty of musical expression- Viswanatha Iyer explored realms of ragas, seldom even cognitively felt by his contemporaries. He came up with startling discoveries of the spell-binding aspects of ragas like Mohanam, Durbar, Arabhi, Begada, Varali etc. not to speak of the perennial ragas like Sankarabaranam, Thodi, Khamboji etc.

It was said of Franz Liszt, the Hungarian pianist, that he "played with a combination of romantic abandon and iron control, which is not a matter of mere technical ability but is rooted in the personality of the artist". How truly does this description fit Maharajapuram! The majestic surge, the broad sweep, the ringing tones clinging to the sruthi and the sometimes incredible degree of scintillation in depicting the contours and content of ragas in Viswanatha Iyer's style established a new aesthetic mark-up in raga alapana. He is still unsurpassed in this respect, even if one includes his disciples. And withal, it was in a pure vocalist style and not fashioned on the nagaswara pattern at all.

In those delectable moments, one realised Viswanatha Iyer's sense of certainty, bravura and soaring imagination in latitudes not accessible to most others. He, one often felt, took unnecessary and enormous risks when embarking on his raga adventures and made his friends and admirers even nervous about successfully carrying them off. Perhaps, he was actuated by what Yehudi Menuhin felt as the need "to liberate myself from prudence and reach the assurance of abandonment

to impulse". That surrender to impulse often produced in Viswanatha Iyer's raga easays, especially around the tara shadja flashes of shimmering beauty for which G. B. S.'s phrase "summer lightning made audible" may not be a hyperbole.

Unlike many musicians from olden days down to the present, he had an instinctive flair for Hindusthani ragas. He could spin out tunes of ineffable rapture in ragas like Durbari Kanada, Behag, Dhwijavanthi, Kafi, Peelu, Desh, Sindhu Bhairavi etc. with that compelling lilt and loveliness so dear to the ears of his loyal rasikas. Viswanatha Iyer could always be depended upon to provide surprises, something or other that departed from the norm, because of his unconventional music mind. His ragamalika slokas, like "Sruthva Guna ...." were a chain of beautiful musical fragments and were always looked forward to with anticipatory pleasure. In dwelling on the notes of these plaintive modes, he would approach the keynote with anticipation and leave it with regret, so to say - a highly effective ploy. It is no coincidence that he and T. N. Rajarathnam were similar in many respects and both were *sahridayas* musically and warm friends on the personal plane

Thirdly, even in the singing of kritis Maharajapuram appropriated to himself a kind of monopoly of outstanding and majestic pieces like 'Nannupalimpa' (Mohanam), "Kshinamaidhiruga" (Mukhari), "O Rangasayi" (Khamboji), 'Siva Siva Yanaradha' (Pantuvrali), "Nannu Vidachi" (Ritigowla), "Undedi Ramudu (Harikhamboji), "Kanakanaruchira", the

immortal Pancharatna piece in Varali, for which he alone seemed to have the correct 'padanthara', besides "Chalagalla" (Arabhi), "Manamuleda" (Amir Kalyani) and others. He affixed his stamp on all these pieces. In the niravals, he often let himself go in sweet flights of fancy.

He never suffered from the drawback of predictability or sameness, because of his quicksilver mind and his intuitive feeling for the form and glow of musical phrases. The listener's imagination was often seduced by his admirable creativity. For instance, elements in a song which one never noticed before, would suddenly spring to life in his interpretation of them. He had the knack of displaying the texture of a song much like a jeweller exhibiting the facets of a diamond. The same song in the hands of another musician would seem insipid, after hearing Viswanatha Iyer sing it.

Fourthly, it cannot be too strongly affirmed that Maharajapuram jealously guarded his prerogatives on the platform as the leader. Woe to the accompanist who failed to tow the line properly or tried to assert himself. Any such show of conceit would receive short shrift from him. (This writer remembers a concert in which a very senior violinist of those days played a note off-key and was instantly snubbed by a loud "Sabash" from Viswanatha Iyer) Yet, the concerts in the early decades of this century witnessed a healthy artistic rivalry on the platform for winning the plaudits of the crowd-obtained through genuinely highclass displays of excellence. This helped to raise concerts to a high pinnacle of enjoyment. Instead of that healthy rivalry, there is only collusion today, resulting in flat concerts.

Even as one reads these lines, a comparison may keep cropping up in the sub-conscious mind - that is, with Sri Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, his great contemporary. Such comparisons are untenable because these two masters were so totally different in outlook, technique, aptitudes and endowment. Both had their high noons. Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar was a planner non pareil. He poured his ripe music into moulds carefully structured and mounted. Like Milton's blank verse, it was always serious, serene and sober. Maharajapuram's music was more melodic, lambent, mercurial, shot with imagination- and *ipso facto* of varying consistency sometimes, even delightfully impish - a mixture of Shakespeare and Shelley. Which one is more fancied would depend on one's own likes and temperament.

Shri Maharajapuram Santhanam is a true heir to his father's great legacy. The

son and disciple, while being faithful to his musical heirloom, has adapted his music to the current music culture, given it a greater consistency and has succeeded in carving out a niche for himself. The formation of the Trust is his obeisance to his illustrious father's achievements and memory. The Trust starts with donations of Rs. 10,000/- from Sri Santhanam and Rs. 1000/- from Semmangudi. Donations in a steady flow are expected.

Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer Trust consists of Sri Santhanam, Sri N. V. Subramanyam (of Saraswathi) and Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer - as fine a trio as one can have. Sri N. V. Subramanyam explained briefly the objects of the Trust. One wishes the Trust success in its laudable endeavours. Viswanatha Iyer's unique style and contribution to our music deserves to be highlighted - and followed if that were possible.

KSM



## “Kalakshetra - Rukmini Devi”

Re miniscences by S. SHARADA ★

By

Dr. H. K. RANGANATH, BANGALORE.

While one is awaiting the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of Kalakshetra at the end of the year, this volume comes as an appetiser. The diary - like documented volume makes one look back with nostalgia, at the formative years of an outstanding institution of South Indian classical arts and culture, and its many meaningful achievements. The story of Kalakshetra is nothing if it is not the story of the eventful life of Rukmini Devi, who, under the inspiration of her illustrious husband, Dr. Arundale, built it brick by brick. It is therefore natural that respectful reference to the immense talent, painstaking training, forward vision and the quiet revolt of Rukmini Devi against the then established order of classical performing arts, with particular reference to Bharatanatyam, are found in page after page. The volume, in its totality, is in fact, a tribute to a great artist, teacher and builder, by a dedicated disciple who is under an unshakeable spell of the colossus.

“To those of us who were fortunate to witness her performances, each one was a fresh spiritual experience. She was not only beautiful, but was

able to express fully the physical, emotional and mental aspects of this dance and depict the import of the music to which she danced” (P. 40).

\* \* \*

“It was Rukmini Devi who first called this dance ‘Bharatanatyam’, as it originated from the great sage Bharata. There was great opposition to Rukmini Devi, a Brahmin lady, learning this art which was degraded because it had become the profession of Devadasis. She had proved that the physical art, when presented with purity, devoid of vulgarity, could convey the soul- uplifting message of ancient India” (P. 43.)

\* \* \*

“Rukmini Devi was the first to dance with proper stage lighting in the theatre. She also arranged suitable back-drops and wings in dark blue, with a front curtain with a huge Nandi and temple pillars painted on these”. (P. 44)

\*Published by Kalamandir Trust, Madras - 600 041.  
PP. 226. Price Rs. 125/-

There is no denying that Rukmini Devi brought a seachange in the attitude of artists, audiences and critics to the classical art from the tight grip of a small clan of traditional professionals.

"who never believed it possible for anybody else to conduct a dance performance, I have always had a determination that this must go. Now there are so many girls from good families who are excellent dancers. The second aspect is to train Nattuvanars from good families"-Rukmini Devi (P, 50).

That was no mean revolution.

And what is more, to have harnessed the goodwill of master-musicians and dancers like Tiger Varadachar, Karai Kui Sambasiva Iyer, Mysore K. Vasudevacharya, Papanasam Sivan, Meenakshisundaram Pillai and the like, and to have meticulously trained generations of artists, as also to have evolved and produced a series of awe-inspiring dance dramas, twenty-six of them, starting with Kuttala Kuravanji (1944) through the high points of the Ramayana including Maha Pattabhisheka (1970) to Geeta Govindam and Meera of Mewar (1984), was an achievement which made the country, and in fact, the world at large, look up to Rukmini Devi with unbelieving wonder. We have a step-by-step detail of the rehearsals and production methods of these programmes, and each page holds out a lesson to the practitioner in particular.

The volume is absorbing from another standpoint of a subjective account of the

'smallness' of the great and the greatness of the 'small' people in the world of arts. It has many accounts of amusement like the superstitions of Karaikudi, and tragedy like the passing away of the talented Conrad Woldring, the immense humility of Vasudevacharya and of the creative capacity of the great Tiger Varadachar.

Rukmini Devi has joined the nation's band of illustrious octogenarians and Kalakshetra, her brainchild, has completed five decades of meaningful work in the cause of classical arts and culture. Such people of eminence and such institutions of dedication appear, as the classical literature says, 'only because of the *Bhāgya* of the *Bhuvana*', (goodluck of a people). However, the saga of Rukmini Devi's life, surely, would have encountered many situations of frustration and failures. The book would have achieved a better balance, if those situations also were recorded and included.

After reading the volume authored by S. Sharada, who, with all her humility, has made considerable contribution to the achievement of Kalakshetra, one would eagerly look forward to the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, to have a closer look at the great artist and her noble institution. One would also wish that a less expensive edition of the book is made available at that time, so that the non-affluent, but deeply interested, ordinary people like students and connoisseurs would possess copies, to draw not only inspiration but also guidelines, in the study and practice of the classical arts.

## Bharata Natyam and Allied Dances of South India\*

By

T. S. PARTHASARATHY

"Bharata Natyam, the most popular classical Indian dance form, has received universal approbation as one of the subtlest expressions of Indian culture. Its intimate connection with the temple, as a ritualistic art, mirroring the imperceptible feelings of a devotee, reflects the inwardness of Hindu culture" says a delightfully vague blurb in a prestigious publication on Bharata Natyam, the price of which is beyond the reach of the common man. In the same publication, a Punjabi writer in his introduction claims that "it has survived for nearly 3000 years in our country, almost intact etc."

As a counterblast to this Dr. P. S. R. Appa Rao, in his excellent monograph on Bharata's Natya Sastra, says "it is obvious that Natya is exclusively drama and not dance. However, a confusion has been created in the minds of the public by the word Bharata Natyam to mean one of the classical dance forms from Tanjore. It is neither Natya nor its form has been originated by sage Bharata but only a form of dance, which is 160 years old. Hence, Natya Sastra should not be confused as the science of dance."

I leave it to the discerning student of Bharata Natyam to decide which of these

diametrically opposite views are acceptable.

It is common knowledge that what we now call 'Bharata Natyam' was called, say 60 years ago, as Sadir, Chinna Melam, and other names. The terms Bharatam, Natyam, Adal, Kuttu, Natanam, etc. were also being used in Tamil Nadu in a loose manner.

### The Name

The word 'Sadir' was the term which was most commonly used. This is not a Tamil word; and in north Indian languages like Hindi, Urdu, Marathi and Bengali it means the 'highest court of law'. B. R. Rajam Iyer, in his Tamil novel *Kamalam-bal Charitram* calls a dance performance of his time (end of the 19th century) as 'Sadir'. Subrahmanya Bharathi, in his article on 'Abhinaya' written about 75 years ago, calls dance as 'Natyam' and 'Kuttu' and a dancer as a 'kuttan'. It is to be noted that he does not use the term 'Bharata Natyam'.

In Telugu, however, the word 'Chaduru' means a 'sabha' and a 'dance performance arranged during occasions like weddings'. It is perhaps this word used during the Nayak period that has come down to us as 'Sadir'. Kshetrajna uses the word 'Chaduru' in his padam

\* Lecture delivered at the Seminar on 'The Performing Arts of the Southern Region, Dance styles, their inter - links; arranged by the Institute of Traditional Cultures, Madras (17-8-1985) at Bharati Vidya Bhavan Auditorium.

-Vedukato' to mean a sabha or a court of Tirumala Nayak of Madurai.

#### "Bharata Natyam"

It is not as if the name 'Bharata Natyam' has not been used before this century. Purandara Dasa (1484-1564) in his song 'Adidanu' (Arabbi-Adi) says that Rambha and Urvashi, the celestial dancers, danced the 'Bharata Natyas' (Rambhey-urvasi ramaniyarellaru chandade Bharata natyagala natise). The plural should be noted and Purandara Dasa did not certainly mean the 'Sadir' of Tanjore.

Strangely enough, an unknown commentator on the 'Bharata Senapatiyam', a Tamil work on dance (not the work of the Sangam period) says that 'the four abhinayas, Angikam, Vachikam, Aharyam and Satvikam, constitute Bharata Natyam'. This work was published by the Dr. Swaminatha Iyer Library in 1943 but the author's date is not known.

#### Different Interpretations

Different interpretations are given for the term 'Bharata Natyam' which is claimed to be the oldest form of codified dance in the world. According to some, it means 'the dance of India' (Bharat) but defined it as 'Natya in the style laid down by Bharata Muni' but several other classical dance forms of India follow the Natya Sastra in some way or the other. In fact, there is no Indian classical dance which can claim complete freedom from the Natya Sastra.

Others look askance at this definition and assert that it refers only to the dances of the courtesans of Thanjavur and had its origin in the temples and princely courts of

South India. It is performed solo and consists of Nritya (pure dance) as well as Nritya (expressional dance) and its technique is largely based on the Natya Sastra and Abhinaya Darpana.

Natya connotes any one or all of the three allied performances viz., pure dance, interpretative dance and dramatic representation. The dancer acts through gestures, facial expressions and rhythmic movements. Dance speaks to us in a language parallel to that of music or poetry. Classical dance keeps time while a song is sung describing a mood or a story. Concurrently, the meaning of the song appeals to the intellect, the music catches the ear and the eyes feast upon the abhinaya.

#### The Natya Sastra and Sadir

It would be wrong to assume that because Sadir is now called Bharata Natyam, the Natya Sastra of Bharata deals only with this kind of solo dance. *Bharata's classic is not merely a treatise on dance but a compendium which deals comprehensively with dramaturgy including poetics and everything connected with the stage like its construction, make-up of artistes, acting, music, etc.* In the sloka 'Munina Bharatena' in his play 'Vikramorvasiya', Kalidasa refers to sage Bharata not merely as an authority on the theory of Sanskrit drama but as a producer of a particular play in which was incorporated the delineation of the eight rasas. Bharata's work remains the earliest and richest source of information on dance and matters pertaining to it. It became the standard work on dance and was followed by all subsequent writers on the subject.

The Sadir's claim to be called Bharata Natyam is not totally illegitimate because it follows, if danced in the traditional way, many of the dance patterns described in the Natya Sastra. An immense variety of exquisite rhythmic patterns called Nritya on the one hand and highly refined and suggestively symbolic Abhinaya on the other, distinguish Bharata Natyam from the other styles of dancing in the world. Every dance unit called Karana in Sanskrit or Adavu in Tamil is made up of a specific pose, a foot-movement and a Nritya Hasta. A continuation of such units makes an Angahara (dance sequence) and a number of Angaharas constitutes a full dance. The Nritya or pure dance is "simply being beautiful to look at". Though in other dance systems also some poses and hand movements are combined, in Bharata Natya, it is combined to such a perfection as to produce an immense variety of dance patterns with beauty hands synchronizing with poses and footwork. This is further embellished by the addition of graceful neck and eye movements.

(Present day writers on dance try to make a distinction between *adavu* and *adaivu*. The Tamil dictionary makes no difference between the two words. The word 'adaivu' has no less than fourteen meanings while 'adavu' is used only in dance. The origin of the word seems to be the Telugu word 'adugu' or 'aduvu' meaning 'feet'. In the dance section of Tulaja's 'Sangita Saramrita' a number of *adavus* have been described and the Sanskrit equivalent has been given as 'kuttanam' which means the striking of the ground with the foot. A sloka from the 'Sangita Muktavali' makes this more clear.

"Etani karanan yahuh 'adu' sabdena  
laukikah  
Nata Andbradi desasthah tauryatrika  
vicakshanah"

(These are called 'karanas' or 'adu' by the people and also by the dancers of Andhra and other areas who are experts in song, dance or instrumental music).

#### Dance in Ancient Tamil Nadu

A brief reference will be made here to dance in ancient Tamil Nadu which was being practised by all classes of people as described in the Tolkappiyam, the oldest Tamil work. The kinds of dancing, Vallikuttu and Kazhanilaikkuttu are described but as we do not know their grammar we are unable to compare them with the present day dance patterns.

The Silappadhikaram is, however, a treasurehouse so far as dance in Tamil Nadu is concerned. Ilango Adigal refers to the dances of Siva, Murugan, Kama, Lakshmi and Indrani. Siva is said to have danced the Kodukotti and Pandarangam after his burning of the three cities (Tripuradaha). This is exactly the same dance referred to by Bharata in his Natya Sastra as having been performed by Siva on the same occasion.

#### Plethora of Literature

There is no dearth of literature on the Natya Sastra and subsequent works on dance like the 'Nrittaratnavali' of Jayasenapati, but these are of use only to the scholar. When a practical dancer tries to find out which dance forms existed in the Chola period, he is referred to some inscriptions or Karana sculptures in some temples. There is hardly any reliable literature on the Sadir as it is danced today in



the name of Bharata Natyam. After the decline of the Chola empire, Tamil Nadu was invaded by Malik Kafur in 1310 and there was political chaos till 1370. After the areas were retrieved by the Vijayanagar forces, the Tamil portion was being ruled by the Vijayanagar kings till the setting up of the Nayak rule in Tanjore in 1530. No account of what was happening in the dance field during nearly two centuries is available. Some details are available only from the reign of Raghunatha Nayak (1614-1635) and Vijayaraghava Nayak (1635-1673) from the Telugu literature written at the time. Not only the music but dance was also called as 'Karnatakamu'. A complete picture of Sangita, Sahitya and Natya prevalent in the court of the last two Nayaks is to be found in the 'Rajagopala vilasam', a fine Telugu work by Chengalva Kalakavi.

A large number of dances prevalent at the time is found in Telugu works and these include Allika, Chaupada, Dandalasyakam, Darupadam, Desi, Gujjari, Jakkini, Perani, Sabdam, Kuravanji etc. The names of a number of Rajadasis who had specialized in particular types of dance are given such as Rupavati for Chaupada, Champakavalli for Sabdachintamani, Murti for Jakkini, Komalavalli for Kovai, Bhagirati for Perani and so on. These names would indicate that they were Devadasis of Tamil origin. Recently a well-known dancer of Andhra Pradesh has done research on these dance forms.

#### Dance in Serforji's Time

In 1959 the Saraswathi Mahal Library, Tanjore, published a book *Korvyache Sahityache Jimnas* containing dance com-

positions in Marathi by Raja Serfoji which came as an eye-opener to many. Each nirupana in this collection contains 18 compositions set in the same raga and the order followed by the ruler shows that all the 18 items were being performed in his time. Only a few of them viz. Sabdam, Varnam, Padam, Kavutthuvam and Tillana have survived in the present day Bharata Natyam. One or two of the forms are danced in the Bhagavata Mela tradition. The word 'Jakkini' is stated to be associated with Persia but strangely enough it is found in the 'Koyil Olugu' a history of the Srirangam temple. The composition called 'Servai' (perhaps Sevai) is none other than our Alarippu but the other forms have been unearthed by Acharya Parvatikumar of Bombay. Some of the dance forms of the Nayak period seem to have gone out of vogue during the Maratha period and some more added.

#### The Tanjore Quartette

The advent of the Tanjore Quartette, Chinniah, Ponniah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu marks a new era in the history of Bharata Natyam as it led to the introduction of the present pattern of a recital viz. Alarippu, Jatisvaram, Sabdam, Padavarnam, Padam, Ragamalika and Tillana. At the time of Serfoji's death in 1832, Chinniah, the eldest among the Quartette, was 32 and Vadivelu, the youngest was 21. Originally they were Oduvars of Tamil origin and were brought into Tanjore to recite Tevaram and do nattuvangam at the Big Temple there. They learnt music from Muthusvami Dikshitar and also became proficient in Telugu and Sanskrit to the extent of writing compositions in those languages in addition to Tamil. They

served Sivaji (1833-1855), the successor of Serfoji, for a longer period and composed songs in his praise. The most gifted and versatile among the brothers was Vadivelu who migrated to Trivandrum to become the asthana vidvan of Svati Tirunal. He died there in 1847, the year in which Tyagaraja and Svati Tirunal also passed away. The other three were also patronized by Svati Tirunal and the ruler of Mysore and wrote compositions in their praise

#### Their Compositions

The compositions of the Quartette form the backbone of the Bharata Natyam performances of to-day but the editions of these songs need complete revision from the chronological point of view. Much of what they popularized must have been handed down to them by their forebears who belonged to the time of ruler Tulaja or even before. The prabandhas of Venkatamakhi and Ramaswami Dikshitar, the varnams of Svati Tirunal and a suladi have been printed without disclosing the names of the composers.

The Navasandhi kavutthuvams and the panha murti Kavutthuvams have been copied from the 'Natanadi vadya ranjanam' written by one Gangaimutthu Nattuvanar of Tirunelveli and published with the help of Ambalavana Navalur. This work also contains Kavutthuvams on Kali of Tiruvalangadu, Vishnu of Tiruchengodu Andal of Srivillipattur, Chokkanathar of Madurai and Mahalinga of Darukavanam. Also four Telugu sabdams composed by Melattur Kasinathayya and dedicated to ruler Pratapa Simha (1741-1764) of Tanjore. These include the Manduka Sabdam which is very popular in Kuchipudi dance recitals.

#### The Present Dance Sequence

The present Alarippu - Tillana arrangement of our Bharata natyam recitals is the most logical and also follows texts like the Sangita Muktaavali. The alarippu is a pure nritta item found in many forms of dance as an invocation dance and is known by different names like Pushpanjali. This may be compared to a warming up item like the Tana varnam in a music concert. This is followed by the Jatisvaram which is again another nritta item performed with simple adavu patterns. The Sabdam is the first item performed with abhinaya. This was called Yasogiti formerly. It invariably consists of four lines of literature and is commenced with Kambhoji in Misra Chapu tala.

The Varna is the piece-de-resistance in a modern Bharata Natya recital requiring skill in abhinaya, tala and the execution of intricate adavu jatis. Pada varnams are compositions in sringara rasa or in praise of a deity, king or patron and contain a pallavi, anupallavi, chittasvara, charanam, svara and svarasahitya. Abhinaya performed to the singing of pallavi anupallavi and sahitya of the chittasvaras is alternated with increasingly complex accelerated jatis, tirmanams and adavus. Similarly for the charanas, svaras and svara sahityas.

#### The Padam

The 'padam' is a unique type of composition which plays an important role in the present-day Bharata Natyam recitals. The Natya Sastra of Bharata mentions the padam as an indispensable constituent of the Gandharva. Bharata has used the

word 'padam' in the sense of Sahitya of songs to be used in a drama for abhinaya. The characteristics of a padam are that it is intended for Nritya or dance with gesticulations. A padam should be full of bhava or emotional appeal and the motif is gradually expanded in the charana culminating in a climax in the last charana.

Kalidasa and Jayadeva have used the term 'padam' in different contexts. But the fact that Jayadeva's ashtapadi-s were being employed for abhinaya in dance recitals is clear from the work 'Pada Abhinaya manjari' written by Vasudeva Vachasundra of the North in which abhinaya has been indicated for each word of the sabitya in the Bharata Natyam style. This work has been published by the Sarasvathi Mahal Library.

Today, the Padam is a well-defined composition, known for its slow tempo, saturation with the sringara rasa and nayaka-nayika bhava as its motif. The composers have drawn their inspiration from poetic works like the 'Sringara Tilaka', the 'Amaru Sataka', the 'Rasa-manjari' of Bhanudatta and 'Sringara manjari' of Saint Akbar Shah. In a Telugu work called 'Sringara rasa Manjari' by an unknown author, the padams of Kshetrajna are cited as examples for describing nayaka-nayika bhedas.

The padam plays an important role in the present day Bharata Natyam recitals and is the mainstay for the abhinaya part of the programme. Only mature artistes can do justice to padams and it is idle to expect very young girls to depict the emotions, however well they are trained.

The present day recitals are concluded with Javalis and Tillanas but the latter is more important from the dance point of view as it is full of sollukattus and adds tempo to the concluding part of the performance. Occasionally, a short charana in praise of a god or a king is added at the end. Tillanas are older than Javalis.

### The Bhagavata Mela Nataka

Before I conclude I wish to refer to two allied dance forms of South India which are as old as the Bharata Natyam if not older than the Sadir. The first of these is the Bhagavata Mela Nataka, the main centre of which is Melattur. The art was also being practised at Sulamangalam, Saliangalam, Uttukadu, Nallur and Tepperumanallur, all in the Tanjore District of Tamil Nadu.

During the reign of the Nayak rulers of Tanjore, several villages were donated to Brahmins who were experts in dance. A number of such families appear to have migrated from the Kuchipudi area in Andhra Pradesh and settled down in these villages to establish the Bhagavata Mela tradition on the model of the Kuchipudi dance tradition. The earliest to arrive was Narayana Tirtha, a sanyasin of Advaitic persuasion, who wrote the 'Krishna Lila Tarangini' on the model of the 'Gita Govinda' and also established a bhajana tradition at Varahur.

The Bhagavata Mela tradition is closer to Uparupaka concept than the solo Bharata Natyam as the former is Natya in its real meaning. A number of dance dramas were written in Telugu and

danced during temple festivals entirely by the males of the villages concerned. The main playwright was Melattur Venkatarama Sastri, who was a senior contemporary of Tyagaraja, and he wrote about a dozen such dramas some of which are presented even today.

The three aspects of the histrionic art viz. Nritta, Nritya and Natya find full scope in these dramas. The footwork, the movements of the body, adavujatis and tirmanams closely follow the Bharata Natya tradition and abhinaya follows the accepted conventions. The present exponents of this art are all amateurs engaged in different vocations but they assemble at Melattur every year and perform the dramas during festivals. The music is purely Karnatic classical. Unless immediate steps are taken to resuscitate this dance form and make it presentable in cities, it might become a matter of the past in the coming years.

### The Kuravanjis

The second type of dance-drama is the Kuravanji (literally meaning a 'kuratti') which is another product of the Tamil soil. These dance-dramas were originally being performed in temples by female dancers and the technique employed was that of the classical Sadir Nautch. Tanjore again became the centre of this tradition with hundreds of Devadasis being attached to the Brihadisvara temple.

The Tvagesar Kuravanji, by an unknown author, which used to be performed at the Tyagaraja temple at Tiruvavur during the time of Shahaji (1684-1710) was the most famous of the Kuravanjis. Later, nearly a dozen such works came to be written in Tamil on several deities and

patrons like Sarabhoji and these offer excellent material for enacting dance dramas by competent dancers. The chitrakavya variety of the Uparupaka can be seen in Kuravanji dance-dramas which give plenty of scope for Vipralambha sringara, the sakhi playing an important role as the nayika's messenger. The central character in Kuravanjis is, however, the kuratti, the gypsy fortune-teller and special folk tunes and dances are employed for her part. Otherwise, the music is purely Karnatic.

### Dance Explosion

During the past three decades there has been, in the dance field, a proliferation which may be called an explosion. Dozens of dance schools have come into existence and hundreds of girls are practising Bharata Natyam today as a supplementary qualification. This has come in for caustic criticism from some quarters but the onward march of the art cannot be arrested by such prophets of doom. The revival of interest in this prestigious art form of Tamil Nadu has done the art a lot of good. Hundreds of dance compositions have been unearthed, published and choreographed. Modern techniques are being adopted for costumes, stage decor, lighting and publicity. The printed programmes and brochures greatly enlighten the average viewer and enable him to appreciate the art better than ever before.

Bharata Natyam is on the march, sensitive to all the winds that blow in the sphere of world dance and reacting to exotic influences with some side of its genius. The future is perhaps going to be the golden age in its long and colourful history.

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## Musings on Hari Katha-A Dyeing and Dying Art?

By  
SUBBUDU

Yes. Harikatha is both a dying and dyeing art. It is a colourful combination of music, story telling and dance. It gives wide scope to the performer to inculcate a sense of Bhakti into human beings by recapitulating incidents from our Puranic lore. What modern science has not been able to achieve with immense wherewithals today, this vocal machine was able to do. The Puranas and the Vedas are beyond the comprehension of the layman. It was therefore necessary to evolve a new technique by which these could be achieved.

It all started in Tanjore. Periasamy Sastry was the great patron of arts. The Maharashtra rulers of Tanjore had brought with them eminent Harikatha scholars who had an inimitable manner of delivering Puranic sermons clothed in music narrations and drama, interspersed with quotations from the Vedas and laced with typically Marathi idioms like "Saki, Dindi, Ovi, Abhanga, Lavani and Tumri" to enliven the narration.

### Tanjore Krishna Bhagavathar

Sastri was on the lookout for a bright young man who could be trained in the art so that a Tamil version of Harikatha could be evolved. His eagle eyes spotted a teenager visiting and participating in Bhajans and spiritual discourses. He realised that this boy would deliver the goods

and put him on rigorous training under eminent scholars in Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi and Hindi, not to speak of physical instruction too. After a full-fledged six years' training Krishna was ready to blossom into the now famous Krishna Bhagavathar. Sastri was happy that destiny had produced a rare phenomenon.

His first discourse was Radha Kalyanam. No wonder it clicked, as Lord Krishna's life and exploits have been a perennial source of inspiration to artistes, be they musicians, dramatists or dancers. Lord Krishna was a multifaceted personality, combining in himself a child, a diplomat, a warrior and a spiritual leader. Radha Kalyanam in Krishna Bhagavathar's deft handling was a great success and it ushered a new era in South Indian arts.

These details were given to me by my maternal uncle Shri S. B. Ganesha Iyer who, though not a connoisseur of music, was a madcap taking to music in the role of a rasika, cultivating all musicians by doing small errands for them. Strangely, he was never employed nor had he the inclination to get employed. In those days of Hindu joint family, he had no problems about his sustenance. He was a very good singer but totally ignorant about grammar.

### Panchapagesa Sastriar

If Krishna Bhagavatar evolved Hari-katha, Thirupazhanam Panchapakesa Sastriar was responsible for its development. He was a profound scholar well versed in Sanskrit and had a deep insight into the epics. He had a striking personality. Fortunately, he was a great musician as well and the success of Krishna Bhagavatar enthused him to take up the profession. Krishna Bhagavatar on his part was only too eager to pass on the right heritage to a deserving candidate, and found in Panchapakesa Sastriar an eminent disciple. My uncle always said that Sastriar was quick-witted and could provide pithy retorts on the spot.

He was engaged in the recital of Rukmani Kalyanam and was about to detail the sequence relating to the despatch of the love letter to Lord Krishna by Rukmani. An impatient youth in the audience popped up and asked for the contents of the letter. An unruffled Sastriar retorted: "it is a secret letter written by a love-struck maiden to her lover. Can't you wait for a while till it reaches the addressee who will himself bring out the contents?".

Those were mikeless days and an artist had to have a ringing high pitched voice to reach the farther most listener in the audience. Both Krishna Bhagavatar and Sastriar were twice blessed on this score. They regaled the audience wherever they went and carved out immortality for themselves through their scholarship and music.

### Mammoth Mangudi

Now I come to those whom I have had the good fortune to hear and surrender

to. Mangudi Chidambara Bhagavatar was indeed a Titan both in shape and erudition. Sharp witted and racy tongued, he always carried the audience with him. He was the first to introduce the flavour of contemporary comparisons in his discourses. The latest topic of the town would find an echo in his discourses and he would not fail to draw a comparison with an incident in the Purana. After all human emotions and behaviour have been basically the same since the Stone Ages and only the *modus operandi* has changed.

Ironically he was to choose the Bar, but destiny drove him to Harikatha. Once he took to the profession of Harikatha, there was no looking back. He came, he saw, he conquered. But still there were many who felt that he need not, as he often did, have resorted to dance with his corpulent body. That did detract from the aesthetics of the performance and had no place in this art form in any case. True, he did evoke peals of laughter but slapstick is not humour.

### Saraswathi Bai

I now come to Saraswathi Bai for whom I had the honour and rare privilege of providing harmonium accompaniment in Rangoon where she had come to give a series of Kalakshepams. She was on the look-out for a violinist but the couple of concert violinists available there were not aware of the Hari Katha techniques of Dindi, Sakhi etc. Moreover, they considered it *infra dig* to provide accompaniment for Harikatha. I had the good fortune even at my early age to provide

harmonium accompaniment to Angarai Viswanatha Bhagavathar who was a renowned Harikatha performer in Burma. He was very dear to the Chettiar community there and they greatly respected him. By the way, he was the elder brother of the late Alathur Srinivasa Iyer (Alathur Brothers). Angarai Viswanatha Bhagavathar used to be accompanied by his brothers Alathur Sreenivasa Iyer, Panju, and Raghavan, the last one providing Mirudangam accompaniment. I had accompanied almost all his performances and was fully conversant with the technique.

I was ushered in the august presence of Saraswathi Bai and she commanded me to play "anything" I knew. In a jiffy, I reproduced the Pratama Peedigai (introductory overture) and lo and behold! the benign lady smiled and patted me on my back. Let me assure my readers that this is no 'first chapter'. Her voice modulation was another asset that provided embellishment. Having accompanied her for a series, I cannot help observing that she was repetitive in her repartee, humour and manner of discourse. There was no room for impromptu improvisations like the other stalwarts mentioned above. Saraswathi Bai entered the field amidst great odds. Music for women was considered taboo in those days. It was meant only for Devadasis. In a manner [she was the first lady to break this taboo and inaugurate the Women's Lib in those days. She was trained by Thiruvayyar Krishna Achar, an eminent scholar and trained intensively too. She sported a very high ringing pitch that could render any phrase however complicated. She had also a racy tongue and could easily impart a touch of

drama to her delivery. Being a woman, she never failed to make the best of her emotions. This dramatic overtone never failed to establish rapport with the audience. I remember many in the audience weeping when she described the plight of Nandanar when he was subjected to cruelty by fate.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not mention a line about Shri Ramamirdam Iyer who provided Mirudangam accompaniment to her. He followed her like a shadow and knew every turn and twist in her music. Unlike many in the field to-day, he would tune his instrument *only once* in the beginning and give the right wing a gentle knock after the Tani Avarthanam following the Prathamapeedigai. No scratching, no tanning, and other irritants. I for one feel that if Mirudangam is really "played" and not "beaten", constant tuning at the cost of the performance would not be necessary. I know I am disturbing the hornet's nest; but I can't avoid mentioning it.

Saraswathi Bai's Bhajans of Surdas and Kabir Das were always a delight and her diction admirable. But she was always able to carry the audience with her.

### Harikesanallur Sri Muthiah Bhagavatar

Of all the Harikatha exponents Harikesanallur Muthia Bhagavathar stands unmatched. He was a regal person, fond of the good things of life like cosmetics, jewellery, dazzling apparel and what you have. The manner in which he took *tamboolam* itself provided testimony to

his sense of aesthetics. He would take a fresh and shining betel leaf with tender affection as if he was handling a bride, place it on his lap, give it a caressing dry-wash, clip the tip and top of the leaf, then bifurcate it, apply a bit of lime, sprinkle supari over it and finally fold it and land it safely and squarely in the mouth. There was a daintiness about everything he did.

He had aspired to become a vocalist but his voice turned truant and so he decided to jump into the Harikatha bandwagon. He was proficient in Tamil and was a great punster. I met him in Rangoon and his visit was by the courtesy of Chettiars. Like my uncle, I became an errand boy to him and took great pride on being in his company doing odd jobs. On the dais, I was playing the sruti box and almost imagined that I was one of the accompanists.

A great composer as well, he adorned the Mysore and Travancore Courts as Asthana Vidvan. He has to his credit hundreds of compositions all of which have become popular. He had a flair for juicy and rhyming words and this lent colour to them. I would have liked to quote some of his puns but unfortunately they are not translatable.

He sported a stately figure and Omar Khayam-like, he believed only in living for the day. Tomorrow never worried him. The aroma of his 'javadu' always permeated the atmosphere around him and his silver walking stick invested him with regality.

It is said that he always tested the soundness of his own compositions on S.G.

Kittappa whom he considered a touch stone. Only after being rendered by SGK they used to pass muster. This may be an exaggeration, but after having heard his compositions "Thelia Kane" and "Saravana bhava" sung by Kittappa, I am inclined to believe even this exaggeration.

I don't think he harnessed the Mara. thi overtures like Dindi, Sakhi, etc. and after him this enviable characteristic of the Hari Katha style almost vanished. A pity.

### Annaswamy Bhagavathar

Brahmasri Annaswamy Bhagavathar of Tiruvaiyar can be said to be the last of the vanishing tribe of authentic Harikatha performers. His greatness lay in being able to judge the mood of the audience and orient the discourse accordingly. He could be in full rapport, performing before either the Sankaracharya or Vannarpettai. In the introductory stage he would spill out flashes of humour, judge the audience reaction and formulate his style accordingly. His raga alapanas were succinct and to the point. No elaboration. A few sparkling notes will give you the essence of Saveri or Ritigowla. His humour was highly subtle and would not offend anybody in the audience. There was no politics in his discourses. No jibes at women. He was a very highly sophisticated performer. His knowledge of Sanskrit was astounding and even the uninitiated had the illusion of understanding his verses, by the manner in which he paraphrased them.

I remember an incident in Delhi where a senior civilian sobbed and cried when Bhagavathar was detailing the anguish of Rama when Lakshmana was shot down by Brahmastram. With a lump in his throat, Bhagavathar said "O Lakshmana! What answer can I give to your mother? I promised her that I will bring you back safely and alive. You sacrificed everything and came with me to the forest and have not had a wink of sleep all these years and I stand here unable to bring you back to life. I am the greatest sinner". The very touching manner in which the Bhagavathar uttered these lines moved the entire audience and my emotional civilian friend, unable to bear it, let steam off his chest.

This sensitive art which spread the cult of Bhakthi in human beings is dead, thanks to the advent of light music, distorted patterns of concerts and the canker of atheism. A few young aspirants are showing promise but in view of the great expenditure involved in keeping the team together, the artistes are languishing for want of support. There is no economic viability. Sri Embar Vijayaraghavachariar, another veteran, has nearly closed his shop and come down to Upanyasam. Age has withered him. I consider myself singularly fortunate that I have lived to see and hear the great maestros of this unique art form of India.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Invitation to Indian Music** — by Sakuntala Narasimhan,  
Arnold Heinemann Publishers, New Delhi, 1985. pages 95. Price Rs. 100-00.

Writing introductions to Indian Music seems to have been started by Englishmen like William Jones and Augustus Willard and carried on later by C. R. Day, Fox Strangways and Herbert Popley. Books of this kind started proliferating with Indian writers like O. Goswami, Vani Ban Ram joining in, the works of B. Chaitanya Deva being the latest. The book under review is almost on the same lines as Deva's book. However, a distinctive and welcome feature of this book is the perceptive and at the same time, the refreshingly informal way in which the subject has been treated.

This book treats of both the Karnatak and Hindustani systems and there is a constant comparing and contrasting of the one with the other. The last three chapters dealing with concert patterns, musical instruments and comparison of the two systems respectively should be of immediate interest to the new listener. In fact the author offers this book as background information with which the novice should listen to Indian classical music (Preface P. 10). The chapter on "Concert Patterns" is the longest and covers the compositional types sung in concerts, the different styles in the two systems and the role of the accompanists. The author's account of the compositional-types is brief and yet manages to include their salient features. The contribution of the composers has also

been highlighted. The comparison of the role of violin and mṛdaṅgam in Karnatak music and that of Sarrāṅgī / Harmonium and the Tabalā in Hindustani has been accomplished well.

All the musical instruments that are seen on the concert platform are covered in the chapter on Musical Instruments. The description is not confined to structural details alone but extends over the function of the instruments, for example, the role of 'lehra' and the support provided by the tambūrā.

The various aspects of the two systems, beginning with geographical and linguistic differences down to rāga-s, compositional types, rhythm, tempo, gamaka and concert patterns have been precisely compared in the last chapter.

While the chapters describing the actual practice are concise and absorbing, the first three chapters dealing with Evolution, Rāga and Tāla leave much to be desired. This theory portion seems to have been woven out of earlier theoretical writings and treads the same beaten and quite often misleading track. The sources for the history of Indian music being full of gaps, as pointed out by the author herself (pp. 13) perhaps the attempt to trace its evolution is futile. A study of history

reveals not one single stream but a number of streams which at times cross one another. These different streams have firstly to be identified carefully before a general evolution can be deduced.

In the discussion of rāga and tāla, the details are not in keeping with the spirit of the concepts. In the case of rāga, the author explains the idea of rāga in terms of ascent and descent, dominant note (vādī), subdominant (samvādī), etc. besides the variety of notes (p.25-26). But when it comes to classification, the author takes rāga purely in the sense of a scale. This results in statements like – “Using these [twelve] semitones, one can make different ragas by choosing any five, six or seven.....” (p. 19), – “Since regas can also be made with six or five notes, each of these 72 can in turn give rise to several janya (derivative) scales” (p. 22), – “Adding all these possibilities, a total of 483 exhaustive combinations are possible under each parent mela” (p. 23) – “.....under the 72 different scales, 34,848 ragas are technically possible” (p.23) “.....so in theory the number of ragas possible seems limitless”. (p.23).

These statements indicate the fact that the author starts her theory from the wrong end. She then tries to arrive at a compromise with the situation in practice through statements like “However, mere grouping of notes cannot make a rāga.” (p.23)..... Instead, she could have derived theory from the existing practice and confined herself to those groupings of notes which are abstracted from ragas. Svāra-s are

only units into which a melody is analysed and should not be viewed as raw materials which have to be put together to form a melody. Even if svāra-s are taken as building blocks of a melody, they should be considered as “parts” endowed with qualities of the “whole”. The names Catuṣrutiṣabha and Antaragāndhāra, for instance, do not represent svāra-s but actually svarasthāna-s which are associated with the svāra-s Ṛṣabha and Gāndhāra occurring in rāga-s like Janarāṇjanī and Cēdāragaula. Nevertheless, we know how different the Ṛṣabha of Janarāṇjanī is from that of Kēdāragaula and how different the Gāndhāra of Janarāṇjanī is from that of Kēdāragaula. Further, identifying the svāra of a rāga with a svarasthāna marks only one of the characteristics making up a rāga. Hence working out combinations of svarasthāna-s is only a futile exercise and is of little consequence. It is true that the earlier writers on theory have all adopted this method, but should we continue to do this? Besides confusing a new listener these details also give a wrong picture of the practice.

Again, describing the arrangement of the 72 melakarta-s the author starts with a wrong premise, namely “.....the four notes of ri and ga (two varieties of each) can be combined in six ways. (Denoting the four by A, B, C and D, the combinations will be AB, AC, AD, BC, BD and CD).” (p.20). And then questioning the combinations like AB and CD she says “.....AB and CD take both varieties of ri and ga respectively in succession”. (p.20). It is wrong to presume that the four svāra-

sthāna-s between ṣaḍja and śuddhamadhya are allotted equally, i.e., two each to ṛṣabha and gāndhāra. The first svarasthāna belongs to only ṛṣabha and the fourth only to gāndhāra but the second and third svarasthāna-s belong to Ri or Ga depending on which two svarasthāna-s among the four are occupied. If A and B are occupied, then B will belong to Ga and if B and C are occupied, then B will naturally belong to Ri. The same holds for dhāivata and niṣāda too. This is how svāra varieties have to be looked at in Karnataka music as distinct from those of Hindustani music.

Translating Tāla as ‘Rhythm’ confuses the issue. Tāla is not rhythm in music but is an external device which regulates the rhythm of music (and that of drumming and dancing too). It also provides the units for measuring the duration of the melodic lines. Rhythm in music consists of the time patterns formed by the melodic line. This is regulated by tāla as seen in varṇa, kṛti, neraval etc. However, in tānam there is rhythm, though it is devoid of regulation or measurement by tāla. And thus when the author writes, “Tānam . . although it is still rhythm-free improvisation, there is a discernible undercurrent of measured beats in its phrasings.” (p.53), she seems to mean by “rhythm-free” that it is “tala-free”, and by “the undercurrent of measured beats” she seems to mean that tānam expresses itself in rhythmic or metred patterns. The description of Tānam could have been put thus: . . “it is tala-free and there is a discernible undercurrent of rhythm in its phrasing.” Not keeping tāla distinct from rhythm has given rise to many other confused statements in the

book. For instance, when the author states “Through variations in the subdivisions in each of these 35 tālas, (by counting 3,4, 5, 7 or 9 per beat within the cycle) a total of 175 rhythm patterns can be obtained” (p.39), one would presume that by 175 rhythm patterns is meant the 175 tāla-s. But that would be wrong, the phrase “rhythm-pattern” is very apt whether employed intentionally or unintentionally. Tāla-s are only 35 and do not become 175 due to the rhythmic or metre variation of 3, 4, 5, etc. The variations would only give rise to rhythmic patterns and not to different tāla-s since there is no change in the kriyā-s or in the duration between the kriyā-s of a tāla when the rhythm of a song or drum composition is varied from four to five or three, etc.

The author beautifully brings out the difference in the function of mṛdaṅgam and of tabalā : “His [mṛdaṅgist’s] job is to lift the musical level of the artiste’s performance by either repeating the rhythmic highlights in a composition being sung (or played) or offering tantalising cross-patterns and syncopation, and by intelligent, split-second anticipation of patterns improvised by the vocalist..... Since the tabla is essential for providing and identifying the tāla cycles, he cannot normally go into extended variations in rhythm patterns while the main artiste is concentrating on improvisations of his own”. (pp 67-68). But in the final chapter she makes the mistake of attributing to tabalā the same function as that of mṛdaṅgam, ghaṭam and kaṇṇīrā when she states “A south Indian concert could feature more than one percussionist-the ghaṭam and/or kanjira often provides

rhythmic accompaniment along with the mridangam. In contrast, the tabla is the sole accompaniment for rhythm in north Indian recitals." (p.91). This statement is clearly inconsistent with the statement cited above. The position of *tabla* being the only drum instrument in Hindustani music cannot be contrasted with there being many drum instruments in Karnataka concerts, since as the author herself has pointed out, the *tabla* does not provide rhythmic accompaniment but provides only the *tala*. This inconsistency has again arisen because of the author's failure to distinguish between rhythm and *tala*.

The author quite often shows a tendency to rush to generalisations which are not always justified. While talking about the *svara* combinations making up *rāga*-s, the author says—".....several combinations are disqualified because a *raga* cannot drop both concordant fourth and fifth notes without jeopardising its melodic entity ....."(p.23). This is not true for we have in Karnatak music *raga*-s like *Raṇjanī* and *Hamsanandī* and in Hindustani music *Hīṇḍol* and *Marva* in which both the concordant fourth (*Komalamadhyama*) and

fifth are dropped, and instead, *tīvrāmadhyama* occurs which certainly cannot be called a concordant.

When the author says "It is rarely that the same set of notes gives rise to two different *ragas* in Karnatak music while such paired *ragas* are common in the north .....(e.g. *Bibhas-Rewa*; *Deshkar-Bhoop*; *Marwa-Puriya*)" (p.92), one would like to point out that in Karnatak music too, there are pairs like *Gaula-Jaganmohini* *Suddhasaveri-Devakriya* (of *Dīkṣitar*), *Sama-Naṭanarayaṇī*. *Gaula* has a weak *gāndhāra* while the same *svara* is strong in *Jaganmohini*. However, in Karnatak music there is generally a tendency to distinguish between *rāga*-s on the basis of *ārohaṇa-avarohaṇa*.

The author's effort to make the book easy reading is evident. And the fact that the book is devoid of glossary and bibliography suggests that the author aims at taking the reader to the art rather than to the literature on it. However, a little more care in the presentation of the concepts would have added to its authenticity.

Dr. N. Ramanathan



## Sri TYAGARAJA'S KIRTANAS

Sri THYAGARAJA SWAMI KEERTHANALU : Published by Smt. Vummidi Srirangamma. Copies can be had at The Indian Fine Arts Society, 15, Stringers Street, Madras-1. Price Rs. 35.

A smattering of Telugu, a taste for spiritual matters and a book of Saint Thyagaraja's Keerthanas: these are enough to spend in an absorbing way all the leisure one can have hours on end in the company of the noblest thoughts human brain ever conceived. If one also has a knowledge of music, this can turn out to be endless joy.

That is what this book provides. It gives the text of all the known songs of the Saint besides his two operas—*Nowka Charitram* and *Prahlada Bhaktha Vijayam* in full.

It is amazing to find how the Saint meets the needs of the people of various levels of intelligence. From those who can only gape in wonder at the leelas of the Lord, to the highest scholars who speculate on philosophical points, there is enough material for all to study and reflect upon.

Some examples.

The joy of *Ramabhakthi* can only be experienced—it cannot be explained (*Ramabhakthi Saamrajyam-Suddhabhaga*).

Has anyone been happy after seeking boons from you—*Seetha* wanted to visit the forest (see what happened); *Surpanakha* wanted you and lost her nose : *Narada* enquired about your *maya* and became a woman. *Doorvasa* wanted food and got indigestion! (*Adigi Sukhamu-Madhyamavati*.)

I am unable to perceive you, Where are you—are you the female form of *Seetha* *Gowri*, *Vageeshwari*? Are you *Siva*—*Madhava* or *Brahma*? (*Etavunara-Kalyani*).

See clearly the *Paramatma* glowing everywhere in *Hari*, *Hara*, the *Devas*, the humans, sky, wind, fire, water, earth, birds, beasts and in *Bhakthas* (*Paramatmudu-Vagadheewari*).

This book is thus a valuable possession not only for the musicians and music lovers but for the general seekers of knowledge also, what with almost every song being a quotable quote.

As a poet, few can match his brilliance! How many can disrobe a bevy of beautiful belles and still prevent the audience from having sensuous thoughts by rivetting all attention elsewhere?

(*Nowka Charitram*)—Courtesy, *The Hindu* Madras).

## Cultural Scene in Karnataka

By

T. B. NARASIMHACHAR

While reporting the cultural activities in Karnataka for the Quarter ended August, it may not be out of place here to dwell on the musical ecology also. Expectedly, Bangalore, the capital and Metropolis, with its polyglot population, flaunts various cultural activities throughout the year to cater to different tastes. But so far as classical music and dance are concerned, the number of adherents is very small, comparatively. In the case of Carnatic music, the appeal is becoming more and more intellectual: that is to say, it is linked with the understanding capacity of the audience. As one who has listened to three generations of musicians and in particular vocalists, I notice a waning integrity, involvement and individuality in the present generation of vocalists, which is probably responsible for the accompanying instrumentalists having too much sway and a big say in the success of the programmes. Most of today's vocalists are dependent on the amplificatory system for their display of virtuosity.

### Preference for 'Light' music

Added to the above is the repeated exposure to public afforded by cassettes, L. P. records, T.V., Radio and other media resulting in the operation of the 'familiarity breeds...' rule. The two leading Sabhas of (the State) Bangalore, officially credited with a significant number of members on roll, show up poor (very poor) attendance

at their monthly concerts. Unlike the Sabhas in Madras, they do not offer dances, dramas, dinners and cinema shows to their members as bait for attendance. The younger generation of music lovers is becoming increasingly entertainment conscious in their appreciation of music. The dictum 'Old order changeth, yielding place to new' and music fulfils itself in many ways is seen in the headway that Sugam Sangit (Light music, as it is lightly called) is making with the patronage from Government and the public. Many vocalists of classical music have turned out to be successful singers in this medium. Classical Carnatic music is at the crossroads and unless the vocalists wake up and apply themselves to the task of developing voice culture like Bhimsen Joshi and our own Chembai Bhagavathar, G.N.B. etc. mere display of virtuosity is likely to become repetitive and stale. Any amount of hoarse cry about tradition and classicism is not going to attract large numbers, even when the admission is free as is being seen during the Rama Navami and Ganesha festivals.

### Dances galore

Compared to music, dance provides greater entertainment but also the costs of arranging the same are on the high side. But even here a surfeit of activities by amateurs and professionals does pall. Even top names do not attract the same

crowds that used to be seen in previous years. Practically every other day, there is a 'Ranga Pravesha' with lot of fanfare. There are two dance festivals during the year. The Karnatak Sangita Nritya Academy adds to the number. Dramas put up by troupes from Madras draw large crowds of Tamilians who constitute a sizable section of the population in Bangalore. To the 'Every Friday Evening Cultural programmes' (of Music, dance, drama, etc.) is added recently the Every Monday Weekly Art exhibition, jointly sponsored by the Chitra Kala Parishat and the Karnataka Lalitha Kala Academy.

### Purandara Celebration

It is noteworthy that the 500th Birth Centenary of Saint Purandaradasa was put into motion during 1984 at Madras but was taken up by the organisations in this State out of a sense of duty and loyalty, during 1985. The Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan arranged a week-long celebrations. The Bangalore Doordarshan, All India Radio, the Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat, etc., followed suit. The Karnataka Sangita Nritya Academy combined their annual Awards function with this celebration with a four day festival of dance music and lectures with the accent on the works of Purandara dasa. It has become a fashion (if not as a gimmick) to sing the saint's songs, with or without a script in front for ready reference.

### Blind Artist on Show

It was a music conference with a difference when the Bangalore based Bharatheeya Andhra Kalavidara Samgha (Blind Artistes Association) held with success a

three-day music meet during the last week of July. Sri C. V. Nagaraj, blind senior vocalist, familiar to many in Madras also, presided over the meet and received the title 'Sangita Kala Sikhamani'. There were as many as 11 concerts involving 21 blind musicians from all over the state'. Of course some dedicated persons like Mysore V. Subrahmanya (not blind) bore the brunt of the responsibility for the successful management of the Meet. There were six academic sessions by (normal) musicians for the benefit of the blind artistes, (including many lady artistes). The highest point of the conference was a two-day workshop on Sugam Sangit conducted by Ratnamal Prakash and Pankaja Simha. In short the festival was planned successfully and with vision for the benefit of those without vision.

### Kinkini Dance Festival

In the wake of the success that it met with during its last venture in conducting a dance festival, Kinkini - an organisation for grooming and sponsoring young talented dancers-held its second annual festival during the last week of August. Bharatha Natya was its mainstay in 8 programmes, with Mohini Attam by Usha Datar (local) and Kuchipudi (Sarala Kumari of the 24-hour non-stop world-record-in-dance fame) adding to the attraction. Srinidhi Rangarajan, a junior protege of Guru Swamimalai Rajaratnam, Rajasree Gautham, a disciple of the late Balasaraswathi, now being nurtured by Guru Tanjore Kittappa Pillai, were the other visiting artistes. The local junior talents were Mythili Krishnaswami (disciple of B. R. Sundar Kumar)

Sita Hebbar (disciple of A Subba Rao of Coorg). Sumana, disciple of Radha Sridhar. They acquitted themselves creditably. Veterans Usha Datar and Vasundhara Doreswami displayed their experience.

#### Forthcoming Festivals

The Chowdhia Memorial Annual festival will be held during the last week of October this year and will be inaugurated by President Zail Singh on the 23rd October. The cash award of Rs. 10,000/- for an artiste of all-India eminence will be given to Dr. V. Doreswami Iyengar and the State-level award of Rs. 5000/- to Veteran vocalist Titta Krishna Iyengar of Mysore. All the programmes are exclusively earmarked for local artistes in deference to local sentiment.

Dr. Gangubai Hangal, the veteran Hindusthani musician of Karnataka, has been chosen to preside over the 17th annual music conference of the Bangalore Gayana Samaja to be held between October 13-20 this year. The Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat has elected veteran vainika and musicologist M. Chaluvarayaswami of Mysore to preside over the ensuing Musicians' conference to be held at Shimoga (district H. Qrs.) during the first week of January 1986.

The K.G.K. Parishat held a number of programmes during June-July this year entitled 'Eka Raga Sabha, (This involved concerts of 90 minutes duration dealing with compositions of different types and different composers in one raga. The impact varied according to the calibre of the artiste.

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## Dr. S. Ramanathan : "Sangita Kalanidhi"-Elect

One of the favourite pastimes of music punters every year is to forecast the choice of the Madras Music Academy's Conference President. 1985 has been no exception and indeed the grapevine had it that 2 or 3 strong runners were in the field. Nobody, however, can take exception to the choice of Dr. S. Ramanathan as this year's Conference President, to be duly invested with the honour of "Sangita Kalanidhi" on the day of the Sadas. Whichever way one looks at it, Dr. Ramanathan's claims could not be lightly passed over—in fact, none of the three previous selectees can hold a candle to him for *all-round* merit. The fact that his turn comes only now is a mordant commentary on the selection process even the premier organisation for Carnatic Music has to go through, to pick winners.

#### Multi-faceted

Let us look at the long string of his weighty qualifications; mastery of Carnatic music in all its mighty range and variety, not excluding its ancient Tamil roots; deep understanding of Western Music; a Vainika of considerable merit; an impressive vocal performer on the concert circuit, with a repertoire that includes the important compositions made over three centuries; and lastly, such a depth and grasp of musicology as makes him a perfect ornament to any music conference, seminar or workshop whether it is at Bhopal, Manipur, Khairagarh, Bombay, Trivandrum.

Sri Ramanathan, who received his doctorate from the Wesleyan University,

Connecticut, U.S.A., is a "Sangita Bhushanam" — this rather unassuming title was given to those who got ideal training at the Music College of the Annamalai University, at Chidambaram. Sri Ramanathan was one of the blessed lot that had the good fortune to be trained in what was virtually a gurukula tradition in those days when the department was manned by the godmen of music teachers like the late Ponniah Pillai, Sabesa Iyer, Tiger Varadachariar; when the gurus took the deepest interest in the musical upbringing of their pupils—(others K. S. Narayanaswamy, C. S. Krishna Iyer, the late T.K. Rangachay etc.) The unshakeable pedestal on which the musical reputation of these persons today rests is proof of the intrinsic value of the training they received. It also provided them with a spring board for launching into a career of teaching-cum-performing.

#### Two Disciplines

Dr. Ramanathan's depth in two disciplines viz. vocal and veena, has greatly helped in his acquiring the solid values such as a general austerity of approach and a classical temper, that would please the very musical god-head. His range ransacks the output of centuries and he never deviates from the strict classical line. Not for him the flutter and effervescence and strident music that mock the concert platforms these days. No gilding of splendours that a great tradition has left behind. Nothing shrill or brittle. In fact, no wasted display of skill or breath.



On the other hand, his vocal music has structural sweep and security; it can often be lofty and very profound. It seldom fails to convey to his listeners the finer ethos of the classical tradition, with an economy of means, as contrasted with the harsh flamboyancy of today's paladins. Delicacy, adroitness, and felicity of craftsmanship, swathed in an over-all limpid serenity and simplicity, are the chief ingredients of his music. A Dikshitar krithi in raga Gurjari or Narayanagowla, Tygaraja Kritis of the Utsavasampradaya vintage, the Kritis of Gopalakrishna Bharathi or Arunachala Kavirayar and rare varnams of Ramaswami Sivan - you name it - these are his forte. That adds up to musical sustenance of a high order.

Dr. Ramanathan's prowess in musicology is a unique feature of his personality. There is no conference, seminar, or symposium about Carnatic Music (and Pann music) anywhere in India at which he does not have a conspicuous role. His elucidation of even complex aspects of our music is so clear that he can make the audience knowledgeable by induction. Equally proficient in English and Tamil, his lucidity of presentation (coupled with his ability to demonstrate any aspect by actual

singing) endears him to his audiences, normally baffled or repelled by the dry subject matter of musicology or the pontifical solemnity and obfuscation many lecturers resort to, so as to evoke respect.

Naturally, Dr. Ramanathan enjoys a close nexus with music colleges, syndicates, examinations etc besides taking up assignments like delivering special lectures on the theory of music. It is one of the ironies of fate that he never occupied the top position in any of the music teaching institutions of the country (except in Sadguru Samajam of Madurai) though his claims are so strong. The State Carnatic music College (Madras), Kalakshetra and other institutions are the poorer for losing his services.

The virtues of character, simplicity, and consideration for others abide in Dr. Ramanathan. His erudition sits lightly on him. He is accessible to all. We offer our sincerest congratulations to so eminent a scholar and musician in this shining hour of his and wish him a useful long life. The Music Academy's choice of its President-elect is an impeccable one.

RSM

## Prof. T. V. Ramanujam Honoured by Federation of Sabhas, Madras.

Dr. Samuel Johnson observed that "no quality will get a man more friends than a sincere admiration of the qualities of others". That Padma Sri Prof. T. V. Ramanujam has innumerable friends and admirers in Madras City is a fact explicable in terms of his following Dr. Johnson's dictum. The 2nd August 1985 will be a red-letter day even in his star-studded public career, for on that day, the Federation of Sabhas, Madras (recently reconstituted) thought fit to welcome and honour him, with unqualified admiration and unstinted praise, in a beautiful well-advertised function held at the Krishna Gana Sabha, T. Nagar, Madras. The dynamic President of the Federation, Sri R. Krishnaswamy, welcomed the large cosmopolitan gathering and conferred the title of "Kala Poshaka Rathnam" along with 'ponnadai', floral tributes etc, on Shri Ramanujam. Sri K. Rajaram, Tamil Nadu's Minister for Industries presided.

A galaxy of other distinguished personalities, namely Sri M. A. M. Ramaswami, Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Sri T. S. Parthasarathy, MLV and Lalgudi. Cho Ramaswami and Dr. Padma Subramaniam adorned the stage and offered felicitations to Prof. TVR, complimenting him as the "architect of a cultural Organisation and a beacon to the growth of culture in Bombay". In their understandable ignorance of the full and true facts concerning the feat

of the Shanmukhananda's famed auditorium they tended to attribute it solely to Prof. T.V. R.'s efforts—as if, such a stupendous achievement (the Auditorium is valued at more than Rs. 1 crore) could ever be a single individual's effort!

This exaggeration apart, what is of real significance to Bombay-ites, especially South Indians, is the generous recognition accorded to their great cultural achievements in Bombay, by those who direct the destinies of similar cultural bodies in Madras. Prof. TVR was cast in the role of a symbolic recipient of the honours due to all the persons concerned in the build-up of the Shanmukhananda Sabha and other institutions.

Prof. Ramanujam's reply to the chorus of praise was notable for its brevity and humility.

But the function itself, with its spilling overtones of sheer admiration for his long spell of service to social and cultural causes in Bombay, was undeniably a feather in his cap. By arranging this function, the Federation of Sabhas in Madras has also received a well-deserved boost. The special merit of the very impressive achievements of Prof. Ramanujam and his colleagues in Bombay is well brought out in the following extract from the speech of Sri T.T. Vasu for the occasion (read out by Sri

T. S. Parthasarathy in his unavoidable absence), notable for its engaging tone of jallery:

"Sometimes a worn-out joke or a hackneyed cliché helps us to understand a person or a situation better than the profound observations of great thinkers. You would all be familiar with the Crab Theory. An Indian exporter sent a huge crate of crabs to the States. When the crate arrived, the importer found to his horror that the crate was not sealed up but left completely open. But he was mystified when he found every crab in its place. Not even a single crab appeared to have climbed up and escaped into the sea. The importer sought for an explanation.

The exporter explained: "They are all Indian crabs. When one tries to climb up, the others will promptly pull it down and show it its place." The crab theory operates not only in the field of politics but in practically every field of Indian endeavour... Even the music world is not immune from an invasion of this theory. But some

people with extra-ordinary powers of leadership frustrate the gravitational pull of the crab theory and come up to occupy positions in life which command the esteem and affection of the people. Mr. T. V. Ramanujam is one of them".

A rather corny joke—not very fair to the people of Bombay, Mr. Vasu. They are made of different stuff: you have only to look at the long list of big institutions, edifices, to their credit, besides the Shanmukhananda Hall e.g. South Indian school and College, the Kannada school, the Subramanya Temple, Chembur, the Sankara Matam, the Asthika Samajam, Bhajana Samajam, the Tyagaraja Sabha the Tamil Sangam, Bharatiya Kalamamram etc.

Many messages from distinguished people, including the famous journalist "Subbudu", were received wishing the function success.

Congratulations Mr. R. Krishnaswamy. May your Federation grow in stature and strength!



## An Andhra Savant Honoured

Sri T. S. P. Writes

The 'Arudra Shashtyabdapurti Celebrations' organized by an influential committee on September 1 at the Rani Seethai Hall, Madras, marked a colourful event in the annals of Telugu literature. A galaxy of speakers including Dr. Gopala Reddy, Justice Chinnappa Reddy and Justice Sambasiva Rao paid warm tributes to 'Arudra', the Andhra savant who is a unique all-rounder in the world of literature and a man of many skills, deeply committed to social concerns and human values.

Arudra, whose full name is Bhagavatula Sadasiva Sankara Sastri, was born at Visakhapatnam in 1926, in a family the members of which, two generations ago, were adepts in the Bhagavata Mela Nataka now known as the 'Kuchipudi Dance'. Arudra, who was always a restless soul, discontinued his college studies to join the Quit-India movement and then held a number of odd jobs before settling down in Madras 30 years ago to join the film industry as a writer of screen plays, dialogues and lyrics. Some of his lyrics are the best ever written in the Telugu language.

But Arudra's claim for literary eminence rests squarely on the 'Samagra Andhra Sahityam', a history of Telugu literature covering more than 1500 years of its growth, twelve volumes of which have already been published. Like Samuel Johnson,

who prepared his famous 'Dictionary of the English Language' single and unaided, Arudra undertook the formidable task single-handed. The history of the literature in a language is a different proposition when compared to a dictionary. Arudra's *magnum opus* is not a mere list of poets, their dates and a catalogue of their works but contains important events in the lives of the poets concerned, other relevant data and most important of all, a critical appraisal of their writing from the literary critic's point of view. The chapter on Srinatha, the renowned poet, running into 132 pages, alone would entitle him to a Doctorate from any University and it is an irony that this honour was conferred on him by a University at Tirupati only a day before his 60th birthday.

Arudra's interests are as wide and variegated as life itself. He has a penchant for research and an insatiable curiosity to discover the truth not only in literature but also in arts like music and dance. When I wrote an article on Kshetrajna for 'SHANMUKHA' some time ago, I had to draw freely from his Samagra Andhra Sahityam in which he had expressed views identical to mine about the poet's birthplace. Arudra visited U.K. in 1983 and did research in the British Library and the India Office Library. His Telugu translations of portions of the Kalingattupparan-and Tirukkural bear testimony to his amazing versatility.

## Music in 'Shallow Waters'?

By

Dr. Sulochana Rajendran, BOMBAY

Said once a septuagenarian veteran from the North, who has melody in his veins and who carries the family tradition for the seventh generation in succession: "Look at the newly formed lake (after the rains). It looks so vast and sparkling, doesn't it? But it is deceptive, shallow:—like the state of music today." Whilst conceding the quantitative expansion of Indian classical music, he regretted that "depth and devotion" were gradually fading from our music.

He fretted over extra frets being added to the Sitar to better the musical manipulation in preference to deflection and 'meend'. The 'extras' (frets), he bemoaned, amounted to simplification and should this process continue it would not be long before a Sitar ended up as just an "improvised harmonium".

According to him, "the aesthetics of our music is not for the uninitiated. Only the true connoisseur can seek it out like the exquisite pearl sheltered in its shells." He naturally portended a dark future for classical music which, in his opinion, had very few 'true' votaries and they could be counted on fingertips. The multitude of present day performers he dubbed as "clerical" having trained themselves only to render "made-to-order gimmickry, music meant for catering to the most general unformed tastes".

The views of a connoisseur from the South were not dissimilar. He too com-

mented that if there had been a change in the 'sense of values' among those who performed as well as those who listened—a change for the worse—"the fault lies...not in the content of music but in its presentation in a manner that puts off the uninitiated."

The 'deeply hurt' impressions of the veteran and the connoisseur are of course justified. They can't be brushed aside as yester-generation's rave about the 'golden past'. Nevertheless, is the future that bleak and pale?

Not so, if the brilliant rays on the Southern horizon are any indication. Only the other day 'Raga reckoner' Ravikiran took everyone by storm, as a tiny tot some years ago, with his incredible knowledge of Ragas and Talas. Playing for the Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Sabha recently he (now a teenagar) proved how a strictly classical and truly traditional music could captivate the connoisseur and the uninitiated alike. In the effortless rapport he struck with his medium and through it his audience, there arose no complex of 'elitist classicism' or commonplace musical entertainment. It was music divine, performance *par excellence*.

Closely following this was his 24-hour non-stop performance at the Ananthapadmanabha Swamy Temple, Adyar. Call it a divine obsession or a performing feat as you will, it only proved the prodigy's tenacity, devotion and the absorption the traditional, classical music commands.

And this on an instrument with more odd posers than viable features. A fretless, pectoral instrument of the Veena family, played with a piece of wood gliding on the strings, Gottuvadyam (its North Indian correspondent being Vichitra Veena) poses hazard for 'graces' (gamakas) to be harnessed. And it is gamakas which are the life-cells of Indian music. While its loud tone makes it an ideal accompaniment for operas, dance and dramas (no wonder it is also known as Mahanataka Veena), its moulding to classical solo had been no less herculean. To acquire a Gayaki style, besides, was almost a 'confrontation'. "In the very technique of playing the instrument lies its deterrent", observed the doyen of our times, the late Budalur Krishnamurthy Sastrigal. Not many choose to venture into it.

In mastering the instrument and making it 'sing to his tune', Ravikiran has conquered where others shied away. He is not only a child prodigy, but a disciplined student too, learning his lessons with devotion and doing his sadhaka diligently. In grooming and training him, his father Shri Narasimhan has played no insignificant role. He knew the use of the 'rod of restraint'. The early recognition and public acknowledgement of the youth's talent apart, it was a long grind into the intricacies of this divine art. And when Ravi was ready for exposure he came out with a bang, with musical strength and subtlety, and with incisive sensitivity and amazing creativity.

For so young an artiste, Ravikiran displays a calm disposition and maturity. As if to give the lie to the subtle deflections being beyond the instrument's capacity, he glides the graces deeper into the Raga's

liabyrinth. If vocal nuances are child's play to him, songs come alive with their sahitya import; and the niraval that he improvises on the tonal plane alone would put to shame vocalists who struggle with the Sahitya. So succulent is his 'sahitya suggestion.' The sedate, poised style he employs touches your heartstrings. Even the swaraprastharas are not mere trivia tagged on. Ravikiran makes a sound picture of them on a mere solfa plane adding thus a dimension all its own.

Ragas, each one of them he essays, emerge with an image full of divinity, depth grace and charm. One can see him lose himself in the musical depth of the Raga he portrays. There is no emotion he cannot capture, no note he cannot infuse into.

Ravikiran is not a solo prodigy to come on the performing arena. (His sister and brother are equally talented and play too.) It seems to be an age of prodigies. There is the Mandolin monarch U. Srinivas, who at thirteen has already earned world renown for elevating a Western ensemble instrument to a solo status. There is Sankaran Nambodiri already blossoming as a master-singer. Only the other day flautist Mali had spoken about a child (name not mentioned) Hari in whom he discerned the makings of a maestro.

With such promising stars on the musical firmament who are progressing from strength to strength everyday, should we sulk in depression about "the shallow waters"? Instead it may do good if parents, patrons, and rasikas 'rear' them with care and caution and help them shine as true Nadopasakas without letting their egos to become boosted and their music stagnated.

## NEWS AND NOTES

### Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Madras

Sri Krishna Gana Sabha's 30th Gokulashtami Sangeetha Utsavam's inauguration on 3rd August 85 by that doyen of the Bombay cultural world, Padmashri T. V. Ramanujam, had more than the usual éclat, style and character.

Writing on the 'Importance of Style in Art and Life' in the Wall St. Journal (which features a column on art from specialists every week), Professor James Sloan Allen, Chairman of Academic Studies at New York's Manhattan School of Music, has observed :

"Culture thrives on the calculated presentation of appearances in politics and society no less than in the arts. A good performance whether in an arena of the arts or in public life, has a powerful effect. It elicits our admiration, affection and even passion for the performers . . . it has something to do with the peculiar quality that we know, in a much abused word, as style . . . by style, I mean that near magical touch of artful individuality that elevates almost anything one does, above the routine, the common or even the respectable. There is more to style than well-wrought appearances. There must be something within the performer, some attributes of character, that makes style possible. These attributes are imagination, will and discipline. For only when we have

the imagination to envision artful forms of individuality and the will or discipline to impose those forms on our performance, do we achieve true style".

And this "style" the Sri Krishna Gana Sabha achieved on this occasion as it invariably manages to.

The occasion became monumental by the presentation of a special award, in this International Year of Youth, to Master U. Srinivas, the mandolin wizard aged 13 years, along with award of "Sangeetha Choodamani" to Prof. R. Vedavalli, the very deserving and mature scholar musician. By thus honouring Master Srinivas, Sri Yagnaraman and his colleagues not only stole a march over the other Sabhas, but will probably also succeed in weaning the youth, now more and more attracted to light music, back to classical Carnatic music. Dr. Semangudi Srinivasa Iyer has always the knack of sounding the correct note at such functions and on this occasion, he made the very percipient and frank observation that the present trend of audience appreciation was compelling the musicians to be more careful in their recitals.

Dr. M. L. Vasanthakumari, hailing Smt. Vedavalli's choice for the honour, was proudly acclaiming the advent of the fullest stature to woman artists who, young and old alike, were mastering all intricacies, including the difficult terrain of laya, pallavi, etc. She wondered whether male accompanists of the senior order would at least

hereafter shed their male chauvinism! Padmasri Lalgudi Jayaraman hailed Master Srinivas's meteoric rise to stardom in the field with unrestrained enthusiasm and conceded that the teenager was indeed a musical phenomenon who had done his 'sadagam' in the previous birth.

The citations were accurate and fair. Shri R. Yagnaraman, reading the citations, rightly emphasised Prof. Vedavalli's varied assets viz. specialisation in Pallavi rendering, in Padams and Jawalis of the Dhanam school and a formidable repertoire of rare kritis learnt patiently at the feet of that great giant and lakshanakara, the late Sangitha Kalanidhi Mudicondan Vankatarama Iyer. Smt. Vedavalli has, besides the above,

a flair for erudite, witty speeches with which she comperes talks and elucidates many a complex aspect of music with ease and telling effect.

Congratulations to Shri B. V. S. Mani, the President, Shri Yagnaraman and the team of workers of the Sabha! You cannot again in the words of Mr. Allen — "fail to gain the bracing confidence, the affirming delight and the proud satisfactions that.... breathe energy into culture".

Prof. T. V. Ramanujam in his brief but incisive opening remarks aptly stressed the great encouragement given by the Sabha to young artists and to Carnatic music itself by arranging a wide gamut of concerts almost daily throughout the year.

(Continued on P. 49)

## THE LATE Dr. MANCHALA JAGANNATHA RAO

Dr. Manchala Jagannatha Rao's death in September is a serious loss to the world of music. As a vainika of high merit, as an orchestra leader, as an authority on many aspects of Carnatic Music especially padams of Kshetragna and saint Annamacharya's sankirtanes, as an imaginative producer of Geya natakas such as Sri Krishnaleela Taran-gini, Geeta Sankaram etc for the national programme of operas and as an indefatigable publisher of 18 books on 'Badrachala Ramadas', Kirtanas, Kshetraya padams and Tyaga-aja's Kirtis and as a member of the Expert Committee of the Music Academy, Dr. M. J. Rao's output and achievement are phenomenal. And all this fantastic contribution despite being almost totally blind since his sixth year!

The Central Sangeet Nataka Akademy has recorded several hours of his music for the National Archives. All India Radio gave him plenty of scope to show his versatility. In 1955 and 1957 at Patna Radio Station, he adapted the Vina to play Hindustani Music. Later, he served at Vijayawada and Hyderabad stations in higher capacities and he was an Emeritus Producer in Hyderabad radio till his death. In 1941 All India Radio availed of his services even as a poet!

For an artist with such impressive achievements, he was simplicity itself and was always accessible to young learners. He himself remained an assiduous student all his life and his expansive brain was for ever busy on a wide gamut from harmony, lyrics, operas, Tyagaraja & Dikshitar's Kritis, editing of padams, Sankirtanas and what remains? His merit and hard work brought him many honours such as the A. P. Sangeet Natak Akademy's title "Kalapraveena", an honorary doctorate from the Sri Venkateswara University and many others. Above all, 'Shanmukha' has lost an enthusiastic and stimulating contributor and hearty well-wisher. Our sincere condolences to his family.

EDITOR.

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(*News & Notes, contd. from page 47*)

**The Indian Fine Arts Society, Madras.**

Vidvan Sri B. Rajam Iyer, the most truly faithful of Ariakudi Ramanuja Iyengar's disciples, has been chosen by the Indian Fine Arts Society, Madras, as the President of its 53rd Annual Music Conference and Festival. Sri N. Mahalingam, industrialist, will inaugurate the festival on 18th December 1985 at the Sankaradas Kalai Arangam, Theyagaraya Nagar, Madras. Sri Emberumanar, the tireless president of the IFAS, his colleague Sri N. Ramachandran & others deserve warm congratulations for their choice of Sri B. Rajam Iyer to preside over the conference and festival.

Sri B. Rajam Iyer is an authority on the kritis of Muthuswamy Dikshitar, learnt by him patiently and untiringly from the late Sangitha Kalanidhi T. L. Venkatarama Iyer and later mastered by him. Sri Rajam Iyer's substantial contribution to the publication of Subbarama Dikshitar's "Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini", the only authoritative text on the music of Muthuswamy Dikshitar, hardly needs reiteration. As the principal of the Music Academy's College of Music, Sri Rajam Iyer is helping students *inter alia* to acquire the padanthara of Dikshitar Kritis, a very rare commodity. Sri Rajam Iyer, with all his deep scholarship is a man of humility and simplicity. Our congratulations to him.

**Dr. Balamuralikrishna.**

Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna has announced his decision to retire from the professional Carnatic Music circuit. His reasons for taking this premature step—remember Lord Beecham's caustic comment on retirement announcements by musicians: they

never retire but they die—are not clear. Be that as it may, there will be many who will miss his pleasing personality on the concert platform. He rescued Carnatic Music from its sombre heaviness, with his light and airy mastery of its nuances and his steady pursuit of melody, which enhanced the beauty of his charming inflections, "Emotions of any kind are produced by melody and rhythm" said Aristotle long ago and Murali had the power of stimulating emotions with his delicate handling of great kritis. He had an almost inconceivable facility and dexterity in tackling vivadi mela ragas. As a composer in Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil, he is the author of some very mellifluous kritis, Varnams, thillanas etc.

He took our music off the diet of masculinity and coarseness and fed it on an artistic, exquisite tenderness that radiated a serene happiness. Call it emotional epicureanism if you will, but this is the quality that endeared him to many rasikas. Anything he touched received an aestheticising glow and he could invest all ragas and kritis with a refined languor too. He could never be accused of straight-jacedness; on the other hand, the range and variety of his musical style, his apparently easy approach to the whole business of music-making, perhaps made it seem as if his adherence to tradition and custom was less marked than others. In truth, this was not so. What made his music suspect, in the eyes of the orthodox, was his great ability to convert forbidding severity into agreeable forms and give musical pleasure. He had a good measure of himself and his strengths. He used his firm



grasp of principles, his artistic leanings and a winning voice to make his mark as a very sound yet pleasing musician. The enthralling world of art, if not our music, will be the poorer by Murali's premature retirement from public concerts at the zenith of his career. It is heartening to know that he will continue his Radio and Television appearances and also recordings of Cassettes etc. But the public at large will really miss him.

#### "Sankarabaranam"

Even for one who is closely acquainted with Sri. M. Venkatakrisnan through the years, e.g. his long connection with Parthasarathy Swami Sabha, Triplicane and other cultural institutions, his role as impresario in bringing up his new baby "Sankarabaranam" puts others in the shade. Young dancers look up to him for getting a chance to display their merit, and in fact, over the past year, dozens of them have been enabled to show their skills and be spotted by

the sabhas. His monthly journal, well got-up, is an informative publication.

But the Youth Festival of Dance he arranged from mid-July to end-July 1985 at the Mylapore Fine Arts Club with a junior and a senior dance programme every evening, takes the cake for successful organizing as well as public relations. A competent judging panel selected the best among the dancers and recommended prizes. There can be no greater incentive to the young dancer than this gesture. Mr. Venkatakrisnan does not turn a Nelson's eye on music either. His alert eyes and warm heart are out to spot promising musicians too. While appealing to players, Shakespeare makes the Chorus say :  
..... jumping over times  
into an hour-glass" — Henry V

That, in short is what "Sankarabaranam" is trying to accomplish. All credit to Mr. V.  
KSM

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## Lord Siva's Dwadasa Tandavam

நமது நாட்டியக்கலை\* தெய்வீகமானது என்பது அனைவரும் அறிந்ததாகும். உலகத்தில் அனைவரும் ஸர்வமங்களமும் அடைவதற்காக ஸ்ரீ நடராஜ மூர்த்தியால் உலகத்திற்களிக்கப்பட்ட கலை இப்பரதக் கலை. நந்திகேஸ்வரர், அகத்தியர், வசிஷ்டர், பரதர், சாரங்கதேவர் முதலியவர்களாலும், இன்னும் அநேகம்பேர்களாலும், பரத சாஸ்திரங்கள் மிகவும் விரிவாக எழுதப்பட்டிருக்கின்றது. அகத்தியர் பரத குத்திரத்தில் சிவதாண்டவம் (108) நூற்றெட்டு எனக் கூறியுள்ளார். அதில் சிவபெருமானின் தவாதச தாண்டவம் என்னும் பன்னிரெண்டு (12) தாண்டவங்களுக்கு சாரங்கதேவர் பின்வருமாறு விவரம் கூறியுள்ளார்:

1. ஆனந்த தாண்டவம்: இது சிவபெருமான் சகல பிரபஞ்சமும், கோள்கள் முதற்கொண்டு சகல ஜீவராசிகளும் தோன்ற ஆடியது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் ஜதி நாட்டியம்.

2. சாகித்ய தாண்டவம்: இது தேவதைகளுக்கு வாத்தியங்களும், வாத்தியங்களுக்கு இசைந்த தொனியும் உண்டாகும் பொருட்டுத் தேவதைகள் நிமித்தம் ஆடியது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் கீத நாட்டியம்.

3. ச்ருங்காரத் தாண்டவம்: இது ஜோதிடம் முதலிய ஆறு அம்சங்களும், பாவ ராக தாளமும், நவரசமும் உண்டாகும் பொருட்டு, பார்வதிதேவி நிமித்தம் ஆடியது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் பரத

நாட்டியம். இதை மங்களகரமான காலத்தில் செய்கிறவர்களும், பார்ப்பவர்களும் இக பர சுக போகங்கள் அடைவர் எனக் கூறப்படுகிறது.

4. திரிபுர தாண்டவம்: இது பூமி முதல் ஆகாயம் வரை அனைத்தும் தன் வசமாக்கி திரிபுர அசுரர் நிமித்தம் ஆடியது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் சித்திர நாட்டியம்.

5. முனிதாண்டவம்: இது பதஞ்சலி முனிவர் தன் காலினால் தாளாங்கம் காட்ட அதற்கிணங்க பதஞ்சலி வியாக்ரபாதர் நிமித்தம் சதானந்த தாண்டவமாய் சிதம்பரத்தில் ஆடுவது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் லய நாட்டியம்.

6. ஸங்கார தாண்டவம்: இது மார்த் கண்டேயர் நிமித்தம் நமனை வதைக்கும் பொருட்டு ஆடியது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் முகசாள நாட்டியம், சிம்மள நாட்டியம்.

7. உக்கிர தாண்டவம்: இது அடியார்களை காக்கும் பொருட்டு, கயாசுரன் நிமித்தம் ஆடியது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் ராஜ நாட்டியம்.

8. பூதத் தாண்டவம்: இது மான், மழு, திரிகுலம், டமருகம் முதலிய படைகளை ஏற்று, கரிவுறிபோர்த்தி தாருகா வன ரிஷிகளுக்கு அனுக்ரகம் செய்யும் பொருட்டு ஆடியது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் பட்டல நாட்டியம். இந்த வரலாறு மாயூரத்திற்கு 5 மைல் தெற்கே உள்ள வழுவூர் என்னும் கஜஸம்ஹார கேஷத் திரத்தின் வரலாற்றில் காணலாம்.

\* இந்தியன் பைன் ஆர்ட்ஸ் சொஸைட்டியின் 47-வது சங்கீத மாநாட்டில் நாட்டிய கலாகேசரி வழுவூர் ராமையா பிள்ளை அவர்கள் நிகழ்த்திய தலைமை உரையில் சில பகுதிகள்.

9. பிரளய தாண்டவம்: இது ஸர்வமும் தன்வயமாக்கி ஆடியது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் பாவைக்கூத்து.

10. புஜங்க தாண்டவம்: இது ஆலம் உண்ணும் பொருட்டு ஆடியது. இதில் ஜன்னியம் பித்த நாட்டியம்.

11. சுத்த தாண்டவம்: இது வனரீஷிகளின் பொருட்டு ஆடியது என்றும் இதில் ஜன்னியம் பாதசாரி நாட்டியம், அகமார்க்கம், அந்தரங்க நடனம், என்றும் சாரங்கதேவர்கூறியிருக்கிறார்.

மரபின் பெருமை

இத்தகு சிறப்பு வாய்ந்த இப் பழம் பெரும் ஆடற்கலையைத் தொன்றுதொட்டு பல்லாயிரம் வருடங்களாகத் திறமை வாய்ந்த ஆடலாசிரிய மரபினோர்கள் தம் மாணவ மாணவியர்களுக்குப் பயிற்றுவித்து வந்தார்கள். பழைய ஏடுகளிலும், கல்வெட்டுகளிலும் கண்ட சாந்திக்குத்து, ஆரியக் கூத்து, தமிழ்க்கூத்து, சாக்கைக் கூத்து முதலியவற்றை அவர்கள் மரபு கொடாமல் போற்றிவந்தார்கள். ஒவ்வோர் அசைவிலும், தட்டிலும், தூக்கலிலும், நிலையிலும். முகத்தோற்றத்திலும் இக்கலையின் தெய்விகத் தன்மையை மக்களுக்கு நன்கு விளங்குமாறு செய்து வந்திருக்கிறார்கள். இவ்வாறு சிறந்த முறையில் நாட்டியக் கலைக்கு அரும்பணியாற்றிவந்த, சிறந்த ஆடலாசிரியர்களுக்கு மூவேந்தர்கள ஆட்சியில், நட்டுவாநிலை- நட்டுவக்காணி போன்ற சர்வ மானியங்களும், நிருத்தப் பேரரையன், சாக்கைமாராயன் போன்ற பட்டங்களும் வழங்கி சிறப்பித்து இருக்கிறார்கள் என்ற விவரங்களும் மிகப் புராதனமான வழுவூர் நாட்டியாச்சாரிய பரம்பரை வரலாற்றில் கூறப்படுகிறது என்றும், ஆயிரத்து ஐந்துறு வருடங்களுக்கு முன், சோழகுல ராஜகுமாரிகளும், இதர அரச குலப் பெண்களும் அக்காலத்தில் வழுவூரில் வாழ்ந்த

நாட்டியாச்சாரியர்களிடம் கலைகள் பயின்றதாகவும், வழுவூர் கெஜஸம்ஹாரமூர்த்தியாகிய ஞானசபேசர் நடன உற்சவ காலத்தில் நாட்டியாச்சாரியர்களால் சொல்லப்பட்டுவந்த, தாண்டவ ஜதிகளின், விசேஷ சிறப்புரைகளும், அது சமயம் வாசிக்கப்படும் சுத்த மத்தள சிறப்பும் வழுவூர் கோவிலில் கல்வெட்டுகளில் உள்ளதாக சான்றோர் கூறுவர்.

நாட்டிய நிகழ்ச்சியில் தெய்வ பக்தியும் அழகுணர்ச்சியும், நன்னடத்தையும், புராண, இதிகாச, சரித்திர, வரலாறுகளையும், மற்ற ஸத்விஷயங்களையும், மக்கள் மனதில் புகட்டுவதே இக்கலையின் அடிப்படைக் கொள்கையாகும். இதை உணர்ந்து செய்ய வேண்டும்; பார்க்க வேண்டும். இவைகள்தான் இக்கலையின் நல் வளர்ச்சிக்கு நாம் செய்யும் தொண்டாகும்.

கலையின் வளர்ச்சி முறை

ஆகவே, விரசமான கருத்துக்களும், சொல்நயம், பொருள்நயம், இசைநயம், இல்லாததும், மக்கள் மனதில் கீழ்த்தரமான உணர்ச்சிகளை ஏற்படுத்தக்கூடியதுமான பாடல்களை, பழைய பாடல்களையானாலும், அதைத் திருத்த வேண்டும், அல்லது விலக்க வேண்டும். உத்தம ஸ்ருங்காரமான பாடல்கள், பக்தி பூர்வமான ஆடலுக்கும், அபிநயத்திற்கும் பொருத்தமான பாடல்கள் புதியவையானாலும், பழைய பாடல்களாயிருந்து இதுவரை நாட்டியத்தில் கையாளப்படாமல் இருந்தாலும் அவைகளைத் தேர்ந்தெடுத்து நாட்டியத்தில் மேலே சொன்னபடி நல்ல முறையில் சேர்க்க வேண்டும். இவ்விதமெல்லாம் கலைஞர்கள் கலையைக் கையாண்டு வந்தால், தெய்விகக் கலை உத்தமமாக, சிறப்பாக வளர்ந்தோங்கும் என்பதற்கு வேறு என்ன சான்று வேண்டும்?

## Kerala's Art Festival

By

S. Natarajan, Trivandrum

Though the grand fete usually sponsored by the State Government of Kerala as part of the Onam Celebrations in August had to be dropped because of calamities brought about by the monsoon flood havoc of July, the capital city of Trivandrum witnessed a few outstanding cultural events during the quarter.

T.V.S

In the field of Classical Carnatic Music, the most noteworthy fare was that offered by Sri Swati Tirunal Sangita Sabha on 26th August presenting a vocal music concert of Shri T.V. Sankaranarayanan with the violin accompaniment of Shri M Chandrasekharan, Dr. T.K. Moorthy providing the Mridangam support. Sankaranarayanan, being one of the most prominent and popular vocalists of the South, the auditorium of Kartika Tirunal Theatre, the venue of the Sabha, was literally overflowing on the evening with rasikas. Though the artiste faithfully represents the unique "BANI" of his great mentor, the inimitable doyen Madurai Mani Iyer, he embellished the concert with his originality and deep feeling. A splendid sense of sagacity was visible in his choice of the kritis and their sequence in this concert.

The contribution of M. Chandrasekharan and T. K. Moorthy helped to take the

concert at a glorious height. At times, Chandrasekharan was seen to be excelling the vocalist in evoking the deep "raga bhavas". Dr. Moorthy provided a very pleasant surprise by rendering "Konnakol" along with his Mridangam which was a most unusual and heartening experience for the Sabha audience. Weaving rhythmic patterns incessantly both vocally and in his instrument in turn made his "tani" a treat.

Sri Muthiah Bhagavatar

The Sabha paid its homage to one of the everlasting names in Classical Carnatic Music, viz. Gayakasikhamani Harikesanallloor Muthiah Bhagavatar by organizing the Muthiah Bhagavatar Day on 30th June. The commemoration address was delivered by Prof. Nallai T. V. Krishnamoorthy, Retd. Principal, Sri Swati Tirunal College of Music, Trivandrum, who is a disciple of the great Muthiah Bhagavatar and one of his close associates. This was followed by a Veena recital by Prof. S. Rugmini and vocal concert by Prof. Nallai Krishnamoorthy with Palkulangara Ambiga Devi, Seethalekshmy and Prof. Seeta. These concerts were exclusively on the compositions of Muthiah Bhagavatar. These were ably supported by N. V. Babu Narain (Violin) and Prof. Mavelikara Velukutty Nair (Mridangam).

## The Kathakali Scene

The "DRISYAVEDI" presented two superb Kathakali performances in the months of August and September at the Kartika Tirunal Theatre, Trivandrum viz, "Santana-gopalam" and "Narakasura Vadhom" respectively. Padmasree Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair in the role of the Brahmin and Kalamandalam Gopi portraying Arjuna produced superb acting. The music of Kalamandalam Hyder Ali, rich in bhava and clarity, embellished the performance.

Another great master of Kathakali; Guru Kalamandalam Ramankutty Nair, celebrated his Shastyabdapoorthy this year. Drisyavedi honoured this great artiste and Kathakali guru by presenting a memento to him to mark this glorious occasion and organized the "Narakasura Vadhom" Kathakali presenting this great artiste in the role of Narakasura. The Narakasura portrayed by Ramankutty Nair convinced the audience how constant Sadhana coupled with the gift of imagination make a perfect actor in such a difficult role. This is a challenging role involving a variety of complicated techniques and rituals of this great art like the "KEKI ATTAM" and the portrayal of the episode relating to the transformation of Devendra as the 1000-eyed one. Ramankutty Nair did all this with the spontaneous ease and grace of the accomplished master. The other actors like Nelliyoode Vasudevan Namboothiri, Kalamandalam Rajasekharan, Margi Vijayan etc. also did full justice to their roles. The music of Kalamandalam Gangadharan supported by Kalamandalam Haridas was quite good. The team of percussionists, viz. Raman Namboothiri, Sadanam Vasudevan and Sadanam Sreedharan also did a good job.

## Koodiyattam Kalotsavam

Koodiyattam is the only surviving tradition of presentation of Sanskrit plays preserved in its pristine purity by the Chakyar community of Kerala. This Theatre art has a very long past and it is believed that the form in which it is presented today was the result of the modification made in its various elements by the Chera King Kulasekhara Varma, the ruler of Kerala in the 10th Century. In many of the big temples of Kerala, we can still see the "Koothambalams" (enclosed theatre structure) exclusively built for the presentation of Koodiyattam plays.

Though the grand old man of Koodiyattam is undoubtedly Mani Madhava Chakyar, the credit for taking the Koodiyattam out of the precincts of the temple goes to the late Painkulam Rama Chakyar who dedicated himself to the development and propagation of this art form. As the Koodiyattam guru of Kalamandalam, he could carve out a group of young artistes who have today become accomplished in the field. Another outstanding guru in this field is Ammannoor Madhava Chakyar of Irinjalakuda who is now heading the Margi Institute of Koodiyattam in Trivandrum.

The Trivandrum Cultural Society, an organization established for the propagation of classical arts of Kerala, did commendable service by organising a Koodiyattam Festival in Trivandrum during the second half of July. This Festival co-sponsored by MARGI Institute of Koodiyattam and Kerala Kala Mandalam was supported by the Sangeet Natak Akademy. The ten-day Festival had a rich fare to offer to the aswadakas. On all those evenings, there

were discussions and lecture demonstrations with the active participation of eminent scholars, literary men and artistes on the theory and practice of Koodiyattam. These were followed by Koodiyattam performances presented by the Margi Institute and Kerala Kala Mandalam. This praiseworthy attempt on the part of Trivandrum Cultural Society has helped to revive interest, especially among the younger generation in this glorious, though dying, tradition of a very rich art form.

## Soorya Festival

Hectic preparations are afoot for the annual SOORYA DANCE & MUSIC FESTIVAL at Trivandrum from 30th September to 9th October and 10th November 1985. Dr. Balamuralikrishna will be giving the last of his public concerts at the University Senate Hall, Trivandrum, the venue of the Soorya Festival on 30th September 1985. A grand felicitation function in the evening to honour this great doyen of Indian classical music is being arranged.

## Vocal Jugabandhi

Another unique feature of this Festival is a "Jugalbandhi" in vocal music arranged on 3rd October with Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki and Madurai T. N. Seshagopalan. A new experiment will also be attempted by presenting the famous Hindustani duo Rajan and Sajan Misra on the morning of 2nd October, the Gandhi Jayanthi Day, who will give a concert exclusively on the "morning melodies". The other artistes billed in this Festival are Master U. Sreenivas (Mandolin), Samjuktha Panigrahi (Odissi), Vempatti Chinna Satyam (Kuchipudi), Durga Lal (Kathak), Padma Subramaniam (Bharatanatyam), Chitra Sundaram (Bharatanatyam) Charujita and Sinhajit Sena (Manipuri) and K. J. Jesudas. As it would be possible for Pt. Ravi Sankar to visit Kerala only in November, his Sitar concert, which is part of this Festival, will be held separately on 10th November 1985. The art lovers of Kerala are earnestly looking forward to this Festival.



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